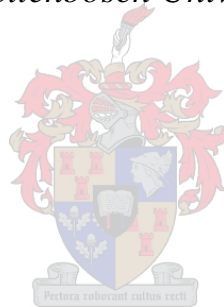


**South African journalism graduates' preparedness for  
newsroom ethics: Views of early-career journalists at  
News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online**

By

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*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Of Master of Arts (Journalism) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
at Stellenbosch University*



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Date: April 2019

## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## Abstract

Several changes to the media landscape have highlighted how journalists need not only be wary of sources and the content that they share on social media, but also journalists need to be cognisant of being consumers of social media and the role that they as journalists play in the spreading of incorrect and illegitimate news. These changes to the media landscape have led to news editors increasing the value placed on journalism ethics training. This raises several questions regarding how well prepared journalism graduates are when faced with the current ethical challenges in the newsroom. The researcher started off this exploratory pilot study by doing a thorough review of prior literature on the role that journalism education plays in the practice of ethical journalism. Additionally, the researcher addressed prior literature that looked at the development of journalism education in South Africa, as well as how journalistic professionalism has changed over the past few decades. In order to investigate the role of ethics education, the researcher relied on social responsibility theory as a theoretical framework for the study, alongside the basic tenets of role perception theory and the concept of professionalism. Social responsibility theory was chosen as a theoretical framework as it suggests that the media have a responsibility toward society. Through conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with thirteen journalists from three major online publications in South Africa, viz, News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, this exploratory pilot study explored how well equipped newly graduated journalists are to navigate ethical challenges in the newsroom. The data from the thirteen semi-structured interviews was analysed by means of thematic analysis. The findings show that newly graduated journalists are not being trained sufficiently in the current practice of media ethics. By exploring the journalists' personal experiences as early-career journalists, the exploratory pilot study emphasised the importance of modern-day journalism ethics training. It further provides insight into how journalism training institutions should adapt their media ethics courses to fulfil industry expectations.

## Opsomming

Verskeie veranderinge in die media-landskap het uitgewys hoe joernaliste nie net versigtig moet wees vir bronne en die inhoud wat hulle op sosiale media deel nie, maar ook kennis moet neem dat hulle verbruikers van sosiale media is en van die rol wat hulle as joernaliste speel in die verspreiding van inkorrekte en onegte nuus. Hierdie veranderinge in die media-landskap het daartoe gelei dat nuusredakteurs verhoogde waarde plaas op opleiding in joernalistiek-etiek. Dit gee aanleiding tot verskeie vrae oor hoe goed voorbereid joernalistiekgraduandi is wanneer hulle te staan kom voor die huidige etiese uitdagings in die nuuskantoor. Die navorser het hierdie studie begin deur 'n deeglike oorsig van die vorige literatuur oor die rol van joernalistiekonderrig in die praktyk van etiese joernalistiek te doen. Daarbenewens het die navorser die vorige literatuur aangespreek wat kyk na die ontwikkeling van joernalistiekonderrig in Suid-Afrika, asook hoe joernalistieke professionalisme oor die afgelope paar dekades verander het. Om die rol van etiekonderrig te ondersoek, het die navorser gebruik gemaak van sosiale verantwoordelikheidsteorie as die teoretiese raamwerk vir die studie, tesame met die basiese beginsels van rolpersepsie-teorie en die konsep van professionalisme. Sosiale verantwoordelikheidsteorie is gekies as teoretiese raamwerk omdat dit voorstel dat die media 'n verantwoordelikheid teenoor die samelewing het. Deur 'n reeks semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met dertien joernaliste werkzaam by drie vername aanlynpublikasies in Suid-Afrika, naamlik News24, Eyewitness News en Independent Online, stel hierdie hierdie ondersoekende loodsondersoek in na hoe goed toegerus onlangs gegradueerde joernaliste is om die etiese uitdagings in die nuuskantoor te navigeer. Die data afkomstig van die dertien semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is deur middel van tematiese analise geanaliseer. Die bevindinge toon dat onlangs gegradueerde joernaliste nie voldoende in die huidige praktyk van media-etiek opgelei word nie. Deur die joernaliste se persoonlike ervarings as vroeë-loopbaan joernaliste benadruk die studie die belangrikheid van hedendaagse etiek-opleiding vir joernalistiek. Dit verskaf verder insig in hoe joernalistiek-opleidingsinstellings hulle media-etiekkursusse moet aanpas om te voldoen aan die bedryf se verwagtinge.

## Acknowledgements

From the bottom of my heart I would like to thank my incredible supervisor, **Ms Marenet Jordaan** for her unwavering support, endless track changes and brilliant guidance. You are a master of your craft. Thank you for never giving up on me.

To all the editors and journalists at **EWN, NEWS24** and **IOL** – thank you for allowing me to pick your brains and for showing interest in my topic.

To my **CapeTalk** colleagues – thank you for dealing with my grumpy side at 5 am daily. I promise to get more than four hours of sleep from now on!

To all my friends who didn't stop inviting me places – I cannot wait to say YES! A special word of thanks to **Heike, Ziningi, Matthew, Caitlyn, Cleo, Markus, Lyndon** and **Sarah**. You are all priceless.

To the best tea-maker in the world – thank you for the endless support, **Elri**. In less than a year you have crawled into my heart and I treasure you dearly.

To my loving family who were always willing to listen to my moans. **Mom** –thank you for being as invested in this degree as I was: you are the best role model and I cannot thank you enough for your support. **Dad** –thank you for encouraging all my dreams, always phoning me back and always pushing me to go the extra mile. **Russ** and **Jess** – thank you for being my greatest teachers. I love you all endlessly.

To the love of my life, **Bryan** –WE DID IT. You are the best study and life partner. Thank you for your endless love, support and passion. I am incredibly proud of us. Cheers to chasing our dreams together for several years to come.

**To young journalists across South Africa - ignore the noise and stick to what you were called to do.**

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## Abbreviations

<b>BPhil</b>	Bachelor of Philosophy
<b>BTech</b>	Bachelor of Technology
<b>BCCSA</b>	Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa
<b>CPUT</b>	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
<b>DUT</b>	Durban University of Technology
<b>EWN</b>	Eyewitness News
<b>IOL</b>	Independent Online
<b>JE&amp;T</b>	Journalism Education and Training
<b>P</b>	Participant
<b>Q</b>	Question
<b>REC</b>	Research Ethics Committee
<b>SANEF</b>	South African National Editors' Forum
<b>SU</b>	Stellenbosch University
<b>UCT</b>	University of Cape Town

# Chapter 1 : Introduction

## 1.1 Motivation for study

Journalism globally has undergone tremendous changes in the past few decades with advances in technological developments, new media platforms and audience interaction altering the industry (Rodny-Gumede, 2016:749). In South Africa, these changes are coupled with the social, political, economic and cultural changes that the country as a whole has undergone since the first democratic elections in 1994 (Rodny-Gumede, 2016:749). For more than a century, journalists have based their claims to professionalism on the possibility that they are able to produce accurate, balanced and objective news reports of on-going events (Schudson, 2001; Zelizer, 2004; Deuze, 2005). However, in the contemporary media landscape, high-impact changes have occurred both inside the journalistic profession and, more broadly, around the journalistic field (Fidalgo, 2013:4). In practical terms, journalists have lost the monopoly on gathering, handling and disseminating news information about the actuality in the public space (Fidalgo, 2013:4). Nowadays, anyone can, at almost no cost and with no particular technical skills or training, use social media platforms or launch a website or a weblog, instantaneously connecting them to the whole world and allowing all sorts of messages to be sent and received on a large scale (Fidalgo, 2013:4). Social media in particular have become an important “working tool” for both journalists (Cision Media Research, 2010:1) and the public – aiding in the gathering and dissemination of information, while simultaneously posing ethical threats such as the spread of false information (Newman, 2009:50)

These changes to the media landscape have highlighted how journalists need not only be wary of sources and the content that they share on social media, but also be cognisant of being consumers of social media and the role that they as journalists play in the spreading of fake<sup>1</sup> news (Uberti, 2017:35). These threats have led to media managers increasing the value placed on journalistic autonomy and journalism ethics (Ward, 2017:137). Media managers have also subsequently started questioning what educators ought to teach aspiring journalists (Ward, 2017: 179).

Most broadcast, journalism and media studies programmes include ethics modules as part of their journalism education and training. A cursory glance at the curricula of journalism

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<sup>1</sup> The term “fake news” commonly refers to false or misleading information made to look like a fact-based news story in order to “influence public opinion or cull digital advertising dollars” (Uberti, 2017:34).

education programmes at three South African universities, namely, Stellenbosch University, the University of the Witwatersrand and Rhodes University, indicates that most courses include ethics training. However, according to Alia (2015:3), modules such as these tend to be isolated from what is considered to be “essential” practical curricula – implying that ethical studies is not an integral part of media practice. This raises several questions regarding how well prepared journalism graduates are for facing the current ethical challenges in the newsroom: Do modern-day journalism graduates receive proper training that allows them to deal with the ethical challenges faced in the changing newsroom? Has journalism ethics training kept up to date with the modern-day changes in journalism? Do journalism graduates feel adequately equipped to handle ethical challenges presented in the newsroom?

Through conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with journalists from three major online publications in South Africa, namely, News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, this exploratory pilot study aimed to address these and other, related questions with regard to the perspectives of journalism graduates on how well their tertiary education prepared them to tackle ethical challenges in the newsroom.

Furthermore, this study provides insight into how journalism training institutions should adapt their media ethics<sup>2</sup> courses to meet industry expectations.

## 1.2 Research problem

A survey done in 2018 by the Center for International Media Ethics (CIME),<sup>3</sup> addressing the role of media ethics in a “post-truth era”, found that “public distrust of journalists is at an all-time low globally” (CIME, 2018:87). The survey found that there has been a surge in sensationalist and fake news due to the unethical publishing of information on social media platforms, as well as by many traditional media outlets and national broadcasters (CIME, 2018:89).

South Africa is not exempt from the challenges posed by fake news, or the surge in sensationalism, writes Rodny-Gumede (2016:749). William Bird, the director of Media Monitoring Africa,<sup>4</sup> writes that “in South Africa fake news is used to persuade people that

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<sup>2</sup> The researcher uses the term “media ethics” interchangeably with the term “journalism ethics”.

<sup>3</sup> CIME is a global, non-profit organisation that brings together a network of media professionals from across the world to provide training, discussion and expertise in the ethics of their profession (CIME, 2018:67).

<sup>4</sup> Media Monitoring Africa is an organisation that promotes ethical and fair journalism through the use of technology, social media and data tools ([mediamonitoringafrica.org](http://mediamonitoringafrica.org)).

there's another kind of reality, people aim to shift political discourse" (Media Monitoring Africa, 2018).

Moreover, journalism in South Africa is constantly being scrutinised in the context of political transition and in the wake of social and political upheaval (Rodny-Gumede, 2016:749). The impact of the changing socio-political landscape and the influence of rapid shifts in technological development on the production and dissemination of media content in South Africa has filtered through to practical journalism curricula at learning institutions around the country (Rodny-Gumede, 2016:752). Yet the development of journalism ethics training has lagged behind (Rodny-Gumede, 2016:752).

Traditionally, according to Sanders (2013:167), journalism programmes have concentrated on training in core skills and knowledge, and the cultivation of the right kind of attitudes that are fit for the modern-day newsroom. Any specific thinking about ethics has largely been confined to the study of industry codes (Sanders, 2013:167).

It is evident, according to Rodny-Gumede (2016:753), that the practice of journalism is changing, and that journalism ethics needs to adapt to these changes. This researcher would argue that journalism education similarly has to adapt to account for the upheaval experienced in the industry, and the concomitant changing ethical practices.

This pilot study adds to existing research by establishing to what extent journalists at three major South African digital publications, namely, News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, are properly equipped by their journalism training institutions to identify, select and bear the consequences of their approach to journalism ethics.

### **1.3 Preliminary literature review**

A thorough literature review on Google Scholar and the database of the Stellenbosch University library indicated that, at the time of writing, no in-depth research had been done about ethics training from the perspective of newly graduated journalists in South Africa. This preliminary literature review focuses on how journalism and journalism education globally, and in South Africa, has developed over the last twenty years. This review is done in order to show gaps in existing research done about journalism education in South Africa.

### 1.3.1 A changing journalism landscape

Wunsch-Vincent and Vickery (2010:67) write that, over the past decade the number of printed newspaper titles, as well as their circulation and readership figures, has continued to decline. One of the biggest contributing factors to the decline in newspaper circulation and readership is the rise of digital media platforms and computer-assisted research (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2010:67).

Similarly, Lloyd argues that major changes in the context of the “digital age” have been challenging journalism in the last two decades (Lloyd, 2016:6). Political pressures continue, and the increased use of targeted misinformation – often described as fake news – undermines trust in more formal journalism, according to Finlay (2017:5).

Wasserman and De Beer (2005:40) say the “broadening” of the range of channels for information distribution, including the Internet, should contribute to a more open society and media sphere. According to Fidalgo (2013:18), the digital techniques and the Internet gave birth to considerable diversity of new media and of new forms of dealing with journalism and public information:

‘Citizen journalism’, ‘participatory journalism’, ‘user-generated content’, ‘crowdsourcing’, ‘weblogs’, ‘Twitter’, ‘Facebook’, etc., are words and expressions rather common these days, all of them somehow calling the attention to the fact that journalism-as-a-professional-activity seems to coexist more and more with various forms of journalism as a civic activity, performed by very different people, under very different conditions and with very different levels of involvement and expertise.

The technological possibilities developed in the “information society”, together with the social and cultural trend for more participation, have opened this field to new actors. This has caused professional journalists to lose their traditional monopoly of searching for, gathering, editing and diffusing news in the public sphere (Fidalgo, 2013:17).

In addition to the growing challenges of the digital age, after democratisation in 1994, South Africa naturally and inevitably had to deal with the massive repercussions for many aspects of its press landscape (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:56). Wasserman and De Beer (2005:36) write that for more than a century prior to the country becoming a democratic state, the South African media industry had enjoyed a loyal readership as well as a tightly structured fraternity “with

barriers to entry as high as the barbed wire fences surrounding the country's military establishments". In the months following South Africa's first democratic election in April 1994, the print media sector experienced an extraordinary fall in readership (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:56). Across the media board, the public interest in newspapers declined, signalling a huge loss of revenue and a dramatic shift within the market and its audience (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:56).

De Beer and Steyn (2002:56) argue that it was not just the quantity of sales that fell in the wake of the birth of the new democracy, but the quality of print media products too. In 2002, the South African National Editors' Forum launched an investigation into the quality of media reportage and found that skills levels were worse than expected, pointing to a deteriorating quality of workforce and subsequent poor outputs at key levels in the sector (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:66). The investigation further showed poor interviewing skills, a weak grasp of general knowledge and a lesser understanding of the importance of media ethics (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:67).

Wasserman and De Beer (2005:36) write that post-apartheid South Africa did, however, see the development and implementation of the Constitution, which guaranteed media freedom, freedom of expression and access to official information. These constitutional changes were complemented by other reconfigurations in the media landscape, such as changes in the industry's ownership patterns, the introduction of several digital media platforms, the start of social media, changes in media education, and changes in the treatment of ethical issues in the newsroom (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005:37).

In the last ten years, Internet use via broadband connections and cell phones, has increased steadily amongst South African journalists and the public, enabling the convergence of services, like voice, video and text. These communication tools used to be offered separately by the mainstream media (World Wide Worx, 2011). According to World Wide Worx<sup>5</sup> (2011:34), "consumers of the media have more options than ever before".

In addition to advances in terms of technology and access to information, changes in media regulation and accountability have also been experienced in South Africa since the dawn of democracy. Since the democratisation process began in the early 1990s, the South African media have undergone a major shift – from an environment in which media freedom was restricted by an intricate and authoritarian legal system to one of self-regulation based on

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<sup>5</sup> World Wide Worx is a South African technology research and strategy organisation, with a focus on technology in business strategy (World Wide Worx, 2011).

constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:22). In 2007, the Press Council, the Press Ombud and the Appeals Panel were set up by print and online media as “an independent co-regulatory mechanism set to provide impartial, expeditious and cost-effective adjudication to settle disputes between newspapers, magazines and online publications, on the one hand, and members of the public, on the other, over the editorial content of publication” (Press Council South Africa, 2018). With the development of a system of self-regulation, the industry concomitantly underwent further professionalisation through the formation of the South African National Editors’ forum (Sanef) (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:22). Sanef is a non-profit organisation that sees its duty as “the defence and promotion of media freedom and independence, as well as the promotion and support of ethical discourse and conduct in South African media” (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:22).

It is thus evident, according to Lloyd (2016:6), that the transition into democracy for journalism in South Africa was not a smooth one, as the “apartheid legacy of systematic underdevelopment and brutal silencing of the majority of citizens was not undone with the casting of the 1994 ballot – nor with the signing of an internationally lauded constitution”.

The three major South African news platforms, which are the focus of this exploratory study, will be discussed briefly in the three subsections to follow. These news platforms were chosen as they are three of the top five most popular<sup>6</sup> online news publications in South Africa, and each has offices in Cape Town. The other websites in the top five include a digital advertising platform, Gumtree, and the news site TimesLIVE whose offices are in Johannesburg.

### **1.3.1.1 News24**

Launched in 1998, News24 is the biggest English-language South African online news platform. The online news platform is a subsidiary of the multinational and Internet group Naspers (News24, 2018). The platform had 7.3 million unique local browsers in February 2018, making it the most followed website in South Africa (News24, 2018).

While the news platform is regulated according to the terms set out by the South African Press Code of the Press Council, it states in its privacy policy that, while it endeavours to ensure that the information that it publishes is thorough and correct, the platform does not warrant that the accuracy and completeness of content is free from errors or omissions (News24, 2018).

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<sup>6</sup> According to statistics from the advertising platform, The Space Station (2018), at the time of study.

### **1.3.1.2 Eyewitness News**

Eyewitness News is an independent news platform run by Primedia Broadcasting, a division of Primedia (Pty) Ltd (Primedia, 2018). The platform supplies news to both the online website, [www.ewn.co.za](http://www.ewn.co.za), as well as the radio stations CapeTalk, 702, KFM and 94.7 (Primedia Corporation, 2018). The online news platform had 3.6 million unique local browsers in January 2018 (Space Station, 2018).

The organisation is committed to complying with the terms set out by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, and is regulated according to these terms by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA). However, the Primedia website states that it does not guarantee that its news content will be error free, or meet any particular criteria of accuracy, completeness, or reliability of information, performance or quality (Eyewitness News Terms and Conditions, 2018).

Eyewitness News relies heavily on internal self-regulation, as well as regulation by the BCCSA, in order to maintain standards of ethics and accuracy (Primedia Corporation, 2018).

### **1.3.1.3 Independent Online**

Independent Online, popularly known as [iol.co.za](http://iol.co.za), is a subsidiary of one of South Africa's multiplatform content companies, Independent Media (Independent Online, 2018). [Iol.co.za](http://iol.co.za) is Independent Media's current digital offering, and brings millions of readers breaking news as events happen in the country and around the world (Independent Online, 2018). With a growing daily unique online audience, [iol.co.za](http://iol.co.za) is one of the largest news and information websites in South Africa ([iol.co.za](http://iol.co.za), 2018). It had 3.8 million unique local browsers in February 2018, making it the third largest website in South Africa (Space Station, 2018). Independent Online operates under its own internal ombud, following its withdrawal from the activities of the Press Council of South Africa in 2016 (Space Station, 2018).

## **1.3.2 Challenges to the profession of journalism**

As argued in section 1.1, a variety of rapid and often drastic changes in the journalistic landscape are challenging the professional values to which journalists generally subscribe. Some would argue that the very nature and boundaries of journalism have been brought into question (Deuze, 2005:140). The clear definition of who is and who is not a journalist, or of what really characterises journalism as practice or profession, is also a topic for debate.



The Internet, for instance, initially had minimal effect on the journalism industry, but with the advent of social media and inexpensive digital publishing tools, it became a clearly disruptive force as traditional advertising revenue began to shrink significantly (Cagé, 2016:56). Moreover, it has also significantly altered how journalists do their jobs (Cagé, 2016:56).

Consumer interactivity – ranging from instant feedback on news stories via online comments and the circulation of news and information on social media networks, to fully fledged “citizen journalism” – has had an influence on ethical media practice, definitions of “journalism” and the future of media (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:26).

Deuze and Yeshua (2001:276) argue that, while the essence of journalism remains basically unchanged, it is obvious that the Internet “shapes and redefines a number of moral and ethical issues confronting journalists when operating online or making use of online resources”. Thus, as Hayes (2007:275) remarks, in the digital environment, “old assumptions about journalistic roles and values can no longer be accepted uncritically nor old approaches to them continued indefinitely”.

In addition to these general challenges to the boundaries of their profession, journalists in South Africa face more hurdles than most people outside of South Africa, as a developing democratic country, may perceive.

As much as local and international media are concerned and worried about the shift from traditional media to a more technological approach, the concern of South African media is focused on fighting the government about censorship and laws that limit freedom of the press (Berger, 2009:82).

More than a decade of democracy has seen major improvements in free speech and the accessibility of news in South Africa; however, a paradigm of journalism unique to South Africa still has to emerge.

It therefore is important for journalism educators in South African tertiary institutions to take cognisance of both global and local advances in journalism. Journalism educators should craft journalism curricula that include more of a focus on the effect of emerging technologies (Walck & Cruikshank & Kalyango, 2015:240). At the same time, however, there should be a continuing focus on fighting government censorship and the threat of limited press freedom.

### 1.3.3 Global and South African advances in journalism education

A review of the existing literature shows that concerns about the establishment and development of appropriate journalism curricula at the tertiary level are not confined to South Africa, but that it is a global problem.

According to Pavlik (2013:212), the focus of the Internet and the journalism industry on multimedia has also disrupted journalism education across the globe. Ward (2017:137) writes that globalisation, convergence between different media, and changing roles and circumstances within the media industry are found to present unique challenges to transformation in the sphere of journalism education and training. Not only are reporters faced with a wider and more diverse range of news issues, but management approaches to news and training also need to be adapted (Lloyd, 2016:6).

It is important, according to Lloyd (2016:6), that reporters are not taught modern-day journalism skills in a vacuum. They should be taught that these skills “need to be implemented within the context of news policy and news management as well as in the context of the continued changes experienced in the newsroom” (Lloyd, 2016:6).

In South Africa, journalism education continues to be under-researched (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:14; Elliot, 2017:76). There are evident gaps, according to De Beer and Steyn (2002:14), between what is taught in the classroom at tertiary level, what is expected upon entering the newsroom and/or what transpires upon working as a journalist in the field.

According to De Beer (2015:185), “potential academic journalism researchers have, largely, turned their attention to the more profitable domain of public relations, marketing and other forms of corporate communication in a market-driven media environment”. As a result, not many studies have been done on journalism curricula in South Africa. In fact, most studies done in the country have focused more on journalism practice in the industry, and not on what is happening in the journalism classroom (De Beer & Steyn, 2002:14).

Several conferences held in the last twenty years have expressed the need for a new and revitalised journalism curriculum for journalism education and training institutions, with general consensus being that institutions in South Africa are ill-suited to meet the needs of a transforming South Africa (Dube, 2013:25). Scholars and commentators have therefore called for a journalism education and training curriculum that not only addresses the challenges posed by the rapidly changing media landscape, but that also is informed by epistemologies relevant to the South African context (Mogekwu, 2005:15; Botha & De Beer, 2007:200; Groepe, 2008:137).

Elliot (2017:76) argues that serious attention needs to be paid to subjects that newly qualified reporters clearly lack knowledge about. These include additional language skills, general knowledge skills, and the “critical need” for the teaching and understanding of media law and media ethics. Furthermore, Elliot (2017:78) notes that journalism education clearly lacks a grasp of the importance of the aforementioned, saying that “teachers of ethics must focus students’ attention on how decisions in ethical quandaries are made rather than concentrating on what the decision turns out to be”. To accomplish this, Elliot (2017:76) advises teachers to help students identify their structures of moral reasoning, adding that educators should encourage more sophisticated styles of moral reasoning.

Ward (2017:4) contends that South Africa arguably has a unique role to play as a developing country with its free-market media. This inevitably causes tension between different factions regarding what is news, how to address media ethics quandaries, and what type of journalism tertiary institutions should teach (Ward, 2017:4).

According to Ward (2017:1), few studies in South Africa have tracked how learners negotiate ethical values in the newsroom and whether the ethics education they receive prepares them suitably to negotiate professional values. This exploratory study aims to address this apparent gap in the literature.

#### **1.3.4 Definition of key terms**

##### *Fake news*

The term “fake news” commonly refers to false or misleading information made to look like a fact-based news story in order to “influence public opinion or cull digital advertising dollars” (Uberty, 2017:34).

##### *Journalism professionalism*

Journalism professionalism is closely linked to the notions of impartiality, neutrality and objectivity, and the meaning ascribed to them (Harrison, 2006:59).

##### *Role perception*

According to Donsbach (2012:56), the concept of journalistic role perception is used to describe how journalists in different cultures and media systems understand their social responsibility toward society

### *Social responsibility theory*

According to Fourie (2007: 194), the basic principle of the theory is that the media must be self-regulating within the framework of legislation and established institutions. According to researchers, the social responsibility theory is the default framework for South Africa due to the fact that a system of self-regulation is in place (McQuail, 2010; Fourie, 2007; Retief, 2002).

## **1.4 Problem statement**

As the journalism landscape is changing, more research is needed on how the education and training of journalists need to adapt to these changes.

This pilot study the perspectives of journalism graduates on how well their tertiary education prepares them to tackle ethical issues in the newsroom in 2018. A sample of journalists who received journalism training in the last ten years, and who were at the time of this study working at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, was used in this exploration. These findings can add value to the existing body of knowledge on journalism education and training in South Africa. Furthermore, these findings can aid educators to fine-tune their media ethics curricula.

## **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

One way to study journalism is to look at the normative frameworks to which journalists hold themselves and the work they do accountable (Donsbach, 2012:5). In order to study the normative standards that journalists adhere to and how journalism graduates view their social responsibility and their role as journalists, this researcher combined the concepts of journalistic role perceptions with the basic tenets of social responsibility theory,<sup>7</sup> with a specific focus on professionalism. In order to achieve this understanding of journalists' attitudes towards journalism ethics and professionalism, the researcher describes the way journalists view

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<sup>7</sup> This ethical theory poses that the media bear a responsibility to society (Retief, 2002:11).

themselves and their social responsibility toward their audience, while maintaining the notions of impartiality and neutrality. This understanding aids the researcher in understanding what journalists view as ethically responsible journalism, and how they feel their training has prepared them for their role as professional journalists.

The concept of role perceptions describes how journalists in different cultures and media systems understand their work and its social function (Donsbach, 2012:3). Donsbach (2012:3) further defines journalists' role perceptions as:

[G]eneralised expectations which journalists believe exist in society and among different stakeholders, which they see as normatively acceptable, and which influence their behaviour on the job.

Role perception can have a strong influence on journalists' professional behaviour, and can thus explain differences between news cultures (Zelizer, 2004: 56). Journalists' understanding of their roles therefore guides journalistic attitude and behaviour.

Oosthuizen (2014:152) suggests social responsibility theory as the most applicable to evaluate and describe the media system in South Africa, since South African media organisations rely mostly on self-regulation in order to report ethically. Social responsibility theory highlights a shift "from liberal ideals toward an understanding of the press and other media as trustees of the public" (Jensen, 2003:177).

In South Africa, issues of journalistic professionalism and ethics have increasingly made their way into debates on the role of the media. It is argued that ethics, the social responsibility of the journalist and professionalism are directly linked to democratisation (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:152). Journalism professionalism is closely linked to the notions of impartiality, neutrality and objectivity, and the meaning ascribed to them (Harrison, 2006:59). Furthermore, professionalism concerns ethics, the conduct and practices of the media, and journalistic role conceptions, and the way in which journalists look upon their own role in society (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:160). In post-apartheid South Africa, the debate about the role of journalists has often been framed as a debate about whether journalists should serve the national or the public interest (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:161).

It could thus be argued that, in order to strengthen journalistic professionalism in the South African news landscape, proper education and training are needed. Furthermore, mechanisms for self-regulation in the media must also be strengthened. In order to achieve this, those involved in training journalists, and the institutions alike, need to address whether current

journalism education and curricula adequately prepare journalists to understand their social responsibility, as well as how to maintain ethical professionalism.

The proposed ethical framework, as a combination of journalists' normative role perceptions and their perceived need for professionalism, will be used to describe whether journalists understand their social responsibility, and whether they feel properly equipped to meet the expectations of current South African newsrooms.

## 1.6 Central research questions

The problem statement set out in section 1.4 was addressed by answering the following general and specific research questions.

The **general research statement** of this exploratory pilot study is:

To explore the perspectives of journalism graduates on how well their tertiary education prepares them to tackle ethical issues in the newsroom.

The following **specific research questions** were thus formulated:

- What form of ethical training did journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online receive over the last ten years?
- What ethical challenges do journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online face in the newsroom?
- How have social media influenced the practice of ethical journalism?
- How can ethics training at the tertiary education level better prepare graduates for the newsroom?

## 1.7 Research methodology

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically semi-structured interviews, to gather data. A qualitative research approach is often chosen to explore a field of study where "limited or no prior information exists" (Du Plooy, 2009:88). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94), qualitative research is also "typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view". Qualitative research was therefore relevant for this study,

since it explored people's ideas, thoughts, opinions and attitudes by talking to them and asking the right questions (Jensen, 2003:240)

Interviews enable researchers to obtain information that they cannot gain by observation alone and thus comprise of the most fundamental data gathering techniques (Jensen, 2003:240). As Jensen (2003:240) explains, "the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them".

For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen journalists from three major online news platforms in South Africa, namely, News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online.

The three news platforms selected fall into the top five most popular platforms in South Africa, according to statistics by advertising platform The SpaceStation<sup>8</sup> (2018). All three online news platforms have newsrooms based in Cape Town, which facilitated the interview process for this researcher in terms of access and time.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher obtained formal approval to carry out the study from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University. Consent was obtained from the editor of each news platform included in the study, and individual consent was obtained from each participant by means of an informed consent form. Confidentiality was ensured between the interviewer and the interviewee, and confirmation was given that the data obtained by means of the interview would be protected properly.

Five journalists were selected from each organisation. The purposively selected sample aided the researcher in answering the general and specific research questions. The journalists selected for the study had completed their journalism education within the preceding ten years in order to account for the introduction of social media into the newsroom. The interviews were recorded, with interviewee consent, and transcribed for content analysis.

The transcribed data from the semi-structured interviews was examined by means of qualitative thematic analysis in order to answer the general and specific research questions. Thematic analysis is done by "looking for general thematic patterns and then organising data accordingly" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150).

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<sup>8</sup> A South African digital advertising platform (see: <https://www.thespacestation.co.za/top-south-african-websites-january-2018/>).

## **1.8 Chapter overview**

The research report is presented in six chapters:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter provided the motivation for the exploratory pilot study and the background to the research problem. The pressures faced by journalists in South Africa due to the tremendous changes that took place in the newsroom with the introduction of technological developments, new media platforms and audience interaction were discussed. The initial literature review showed that, while the essence of journalism has remained basically unchanged over time, it is evident that changes to the news production process have led to journalists having to learn to adapt to handling a number of new moral and ethical issues. Following the initial literature review, the researcher decided to explore whether journalists are being trained thoroughly enough in modern-day media ethics by tertiary institutions.

This chapter also introduced the research questions, theoretical framework and research design employed in this study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter explores the definition of media ethics, changes that have happened within the journalism industry, how these changes have had an effect on the practice of media ethics, and how media education has had to adapt to these changes. Attention is paid to the South African context throughout.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical points of departure**

This chapter critically interrogates the shift in normative expectations of what journalism should be, and how journalists should perform in the 21st century. The chapter considers the balance between social responsibility and media independence. The researcher addresses the concept of role perception and social responsibility theory. The general theoretical assumption of the study are also presented.

### **Chapter 4: Research methodology**

This chapter discusses the approaches that were employed to conduct the empirical research for the study. A qualitative research method was used in the form of semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions.

### **Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of findings**



This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with selected journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Media.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This chapter provides a short summary of the preceding chapters and also answers the four specific research question and the one general research statement.

## Chapter 2 : Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The primary objective of a literature review, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:98), is to contribute towards a clearer understanding of the problem under revision. Dube (2013:72) writes that conducting a literature review enables the researcher to establish how the research question may have been addressed previously by other researchers. Mouton (2001:86) states that a literature review should provide background to the research topic, as well as a synopsis of prior research, existing knowledge and studies related to the research topic. According to Dube (2013:72), this will assist the researcher in identifying any gaps in knowledge that have not been researched within the field of study, thereby avoiding the replication of previous studies. Dube (2013:53) further states that a literature review therefore is vital for any study so as to determine current trends and debates in the field and to give the study a proper grounding.

A thorough search on a variety of academic databases, including Google Scholar and the database of the Stellenbosch University library, indicated that, at the time of writing, there was little to no research on the training of journalism students for ethical reporting – especially in South Africa.

In an effort to answer the central research question formulated by this exploratory pilot study, as set out in Chapter 1, the literature most relevant to the question was identified and is discussed here.

The first section of this literature review will address major changes to the boundaries of journalism as a result of the development of new media technologies. The researcher chose to start in the 2000s due to the fact that, according to Kröll (2015:4), this decade saw the end of an era that was predominantly controlled by the print media industry, and the beginning of the digital news era. The researcher then addresses how changes to the practice of journalism have affected journalistic professionalism, the practice of journalism ethics in the digital environment, and the role of media ethics training in an ever-changing media environment.

Following this, the researcher focuses on the development of media training and education in South Africa and how training in this country has kept up with changes in the practice of journalism.

## 2.2 Changes to the boundaries of journalism

The 21st century saw great change in the field of journalism (Kröll, 2015:4). The rise of new media technologies such as digitisation, the cellular phone and the Internet have ushered in new ways of doing journalism (Jenkins, 2001:93; McNair, 2005:27; Dube, 2013:21). McNair (2005:27) writes that new media technologies have “transformed the process of news production and distribution in ways which challenge the journalist’s traditional role”. What was once the exclusive domain of the trained professional journalist has now been “invaded”, according to Allan (2009:18), by those whose only claim to journalism is that they have access to technologies which enable them to do “journalistic work” (Berger, 2009:33). As described by Kröll (2015:4) traditional media forms face an uphill battle as they struggle with the loss of revenue, attention and audience. Kröll (2015:4) adds:

Journalists are facing, like many other professions and industries, a digitalisation of their business. Journalists are also facing an era of active citizens and are overstrained. They not only need to understand a new public and their newly adopted behaviour as contributors, but they need to understand the audiences’ desire to collaborate with journalists.

According to Fidalgo (2013:18), the rise of the digital sphere gave way to an entirely new range of media forms and alternative methods of dealing with journalism and public information. Fidalgo (2013:19) writes:

[W]ords such as ‘citizen journalism’, ‘weblogs’, ‘user generated content’, ‘Facebook’, ‘Twitter’, and ‘Instagram’, to name a few, are all words that are nowadays calling attention to the fact that journalism as a profession must deal with the fact that it needs to increasingly coexist with various forms of journalism as a public activity.

Knight (2008:118) argues that the Internet has turned all those with access to it into a “journalist” through Internet-based applications such as blogs and social media networks. Citizens now play an “active role in the media process of collecting, reporting, analysing and broadcasting of news and information” (Knight, 2008:119).

The suggestion that the Internet offers a platform for ordinary people wishing to “write, comment and report” has led to a plethora of challenges, with some bemoaning the “end of journalism”, whilst others have celebrated the dawn of a “new type of journalism” (Jones & Pitcher, 2010:163).

The notion that everyone with access to technology is able to be a journalist is rejected by Berger (2009:83), who argues that just because some people have access to technologies that enable them to commit journalism that does not make them a journalist. He says, “professional journalists produce their stories under prescribed professional conditions so as to ensure that citizens get quality information, which allows them to exercise their rights” (Berger, 2009:84)

Jones and Pitcher (2010:169) argue that the citizen journalist is not constrained by the same boundaries as the professional journalist. As a result, the information published by a citizen journalist is not subjected to the journalistic principles of fairness, balance, neutrality and objectivity (Berger, 2009:85). Furthermore, Berger (2009:89) states that “only professional journalists have the ability to provide the kind of high quality information needed to ensure the development of a healthy democracy”.

Since the rise of social media and digital media platforms, news is increasingly shaped by users’ desire for constant “on-the-go” updates – matching their greater mobility – and their wish to participate in the creation of content and to witness and share news (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2010). News has turned into a “social experience” (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel & Olmstead, 2010). Users are no longer passive receivers of news content, but they increasingly use social networks and social networking technology to “filter, assess and react to news” (Purcell *et al.*, 2010:2).

Singer (2005:89) writes that the narrative structure of journalism is changing, as journalists have to learn to keep adapting to the Internet and as “stories have taken on a more post-modern form”. The construction of journalism, and the process of news construction, adds Singer (2005:89), are more fluid and transparent than ever in the past.

Kröll (2015:4) argues that amidst all these changes and challenges to the “norms” of journalism, we continue to find journalists who are trained in the traditional news values of the past. They are taught to verify stories, analyse them thoroughly and provide expert commentary – “the core values of journalism” (Kröll, 2015:5).

Additionally, according to Goodman and Steyn (2017:1), the struggle to save journalism’s reputation, as well as its professionalism, is experiencing new urgency in an onslaught of fake

news. Goodman and Steyn (2017:3) write that, as the current “post-truth”<sup>9</sup> phenomenon suggests, “the very value of facts, truth, information, and knowledge – the bedrock of journalism and free societies – is under attack”.

Beckett (2008:99) suggests that the main challenge to the boundaries of journalistic professionalism is the fact that the modern-day audience is equipped to do the same journalistic work, or “possibly even better than trained journalists”. Journalists are faced with an audience who have instant access to the news, an audience who can report straight from the scene and share it world-wide because of social media (Beckett, 2008:99). Neuman (2015:10) writes that the digital media play an increasingly more important role as “an active destination for news by an audience that is deeply interested in latest developments”.

Journalists are increasingly being faced with the need to understand the “modern-day audience” and their “newly adopted behaviour as contributors” with a desire to participate in the news-creation process. Lee-Wright, Phillips and Witschge (2012:46) write that the traditional role of journalism is changing towards what is being called the “democratisation of the news process”. In order to understand the future of journalism, we need to realise that it is more than a change in “gadgets and gizmos”. The main challenge, according to Lee-Wright *et al.* (2012:46), is that journalists need to find a way to get closer to their audience members, to collaborate and to create news with them and not just about them.

The concept of networked journalism, as suggested by Beckett (2008:99), is used to describe “journalists working with the participation of the public”. Kröll (2015:7) suggests that networked journalism considers the collaborative nature of modern-day journalism that embraces the use of digital media platforms on which professionals and amateurs work together to make sure that the “real story” is presented to the public. When news is “networked”, the public act as a contributing party and can get involved even before the story is reported on by a professional journalist. “The journalist can rely on the public to help report the story,” writes Kröll (2015:8).

The following section will address how the aforementioned changes to the boundaries of journalism and the practice thereof have changed journalistic professionalism and raised new concerns with regard to how journalists can remain ethical.

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<sup>9</sup> The “post-truth” era describes a situation “in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Goodman & Steyn, 2016:3).

## 2.3 Changes to journalistic professionalism

A “profession” can be defined, according to Davis (2010:92), as any full-time activity “defined in part by an easily recognisable body of knowledge, skill, and judgment, a ‘discipline’ by which one can and people typically do earn a living”. “Professionalism”, according to Harrison (2006:59), is purely acting according to the standards that the profession in question requires.

Journalists, says Davis (2010:93), belong to a “profession that collects, studies, investigates and reports on news, in order to provide a fair, balanced and thorough account of happenings and concerns that are in the public interest”. Journalists differ from the likes of commentators and bloggers, as they hold themselves to a standard beyond one that is “set by law, market morality, or public opinion” (Davis, 2010:94).

A “professional journalist” is referred to as such due to the fact that “anyone can gather and disseminate information, but a professional journalist is trained to, among other things, assess the truthfulness of information from a variety of sources, practice care to avoid mistakes and seek out news stories” (Davies, 2010:95).

“Journalistic professionalism”, according to Rodney-Gumede (2014:55), is closely related to the concepts of impartiality, neutrality and objectivity, as well as the meanings that are ascribed to these concepts. It is through this invoking of objectivity that journalism can claim to be truthful and accurate (Rodney-Gumede, 2014:56).

Notions of objectivity in journalism continue to be queried (Harrison, 2006:59). Nevertheless, Waisbord (2006:76) writes that “it remains the backbone of professional claims in mainstream journalism”. Reese (2001b:175) argues that audience confidence in the media is greater if journalists adhere to a certain ethical code and play a predetermined role within society.

Professional journalists are considered to be trained for their work and are expected to follow a certain set of ethical guidelines, according to Sambrook (2012:56). In contrast, citizen journalists lack both training and ethical guidance (Sambrook, 2012:56). Professional journalists are expected to present facts in an unbiased light, through the verification of sources and fact-checking (Joseph, 2016:9).

Hallin and Mancini (2004:251) argue that journalists’ level of professionalism is directly linked to the political framework of the country in which they work. Therefore, “professionalism can be understood at the levels of autonomy that journalism and its journalists enjoy, abidance by certain codes of conduct, as well as professional expectations by the public” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:251).

According to Lee-Wright *et al.* (2012:128), the role of a good journalist has not changed since the dawn of the new media. The role of a good journalist, writes Lee-Wright *et al.* (2012:128), has always been to “filter, edit, check, pack, analyse and comment – fundamentals of verification that have existed for decades and won’t become obsolete – not even in the Digital Age”. The only changes made to the processes of “good journalism” are the speed at which all of the above processes happen, the methods used, the economic pressures and an increased work load on fewer journalists (Lee-Wright *et al.*, 2012:46). The fact is that “journalism is no longer about being the first to break a story, because you can never beat social media” (Lee-Wright *et al.*, 2012:46).

Sorour and McArdle (2011:49) write that “the same ethical considerations which appear in the offline world appear online, but are magnified due to the increased scale, global nature and potential anonymity of the Internet and social media”. The main ethical implications of the use of social media include: the ability to operate under a false identity and therefore limiting transparency; the exploitation of personal information due the fact that it is widely available online; the matter of regulation on social media platforms when it comes to critical or offensive content; the censorship of Internet networks by government officials; and the difficulty of distinguishing between credible sources and fake news (Sorour & McArdle, 2011:49).

Now more than ever, according to Detenber (2012:46), journalists need to fulfil their roles as gatekeepers, as the new digital environment in which they operate presents several new ethical dilemmas. This role is nothing new, says Detenber (2012:46), “but the volume of information that needs to be filtered is a lot more, and less reliable than before”.

In South Africa, the role of professional journalists in post-apartheid society is hotly debated (Rodny-Gumede, 2014:57). Voltmer (2006:7) postulates that “the transition from an authoritarian rule to democracy has required drastic new role perceptions, as well as rules of interaction between the media and those in government”. In post-apartheid South Africa, the news media have to continuously re-evaluate their roles as professional journalists, as well as redefine ethics and codes of conduct to counter partisanship and bias in the news media (Voltmer, 2006:7).

The end of apartheid in South Africa introduced a number of changes to newsroom culture and professional characteristics. Pitcher and Jones (2014:56) have provisionally found that journalists only consider it “somewhat important” to act as political watchdogs.

Daniels (2012:35) writes that the South African government frequently urges journalists to take a more “developmental stance on journalism, to be more supportive of the ruling party, the

African National Congress’ policy agenda and achievements”. While a majority of journalists in South Africa, according to Daniels (2012:42), continue to highlight their role as watchdogs of power, there is often a debate about whether the media should serve the national or public interest.

Rodny-Gumede (2014:227) argues that the debate about professionalism and the production of quality news in the developing world and in a developing country such as South Africa raises fundamental conceptual and practical challenges.

One specific challenge that is presented by the concept of networked journalism is the verification of news (Kröll, 2015:9). Lee-Wright *et al.* (2012:56), say that “because of this challenge journalists need to see discussions about new digital ethics that will aid them in facing the ethical dilemmas that come with the growth of easy digital publishing technologies and social media platforms”. Sambrook (2012:56) writes that newsrooms should have clear ethical guidelines and procedures on how to handle information from the public before covering a disaster or breaking news strike.

In South Africa, professional journalism ethics within the current media system is most often framed by a social responsibility framework (detailed in Chapter 3) (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:155). The emphasis now is on self-regulation, and there is pressure on self-regulatory bodies to articulate ethics and the values of human rights more prominently (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:155).

These changes in journalism, and the rise of digital media forms, have challenged the boundaries of the journalistic profession. This has raised new concerns with regard to how journalists can remain ethical while striving to be relevant. It therefore could be argued that, amidst great political, technical, economic and cultural change, journalism trainers and educators have to realise the unprecedented responsibility they have to fortify and significantly shape the future of journalism across the globe.

## **2.4 Development of journalism education and training in South Africa**

Journalism education and training (JE&T) is seen as improving the quality of journalism by improving the quality of journalists, and is perceived as the “one way in which society can intervene to influence the development of journalism” (Curran, 2005:14). According to Weaver (2003:49), the idea of achieving better journalism by giving journalists a college or university education was born in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. Curran (2005:15) writes that, for much of the twentieth century, the United States was the main



provider of journalism at tertiary level, with the rest of the world only starting to teach journalism to tertiary students after the 1990s.

In a study about journalism education and training, Dube (2013:83) reviews American and European journalists' curricula, concluding that journalism education and training is an academic field in its own right, and just like any other academic fields it demands intellectual skills.

Dube (2013:89) argues that journalism education and training continues to be under-researched in South Africa. Furthermore, Dube (2013:90) states that most studies done on South African journalism education and training have focused more on journalism practice in the industry and little on what is happening inside the classroom.

The end of apartheid in South Africa 1994, when the African National Congress came into power, affected journalism education and training in many ways. De Beer, Pitcher and Jones (2017:175) describe post-1990 South Africa as one with a "pluralist democracy". As a result of this, the media landscape in South Africa became predominantly self-regulated. From the mid-1990s, newsrooms slowly started to move away from an authoritarian system toward a social responsibility model with developmental inclinations (McQuail, 2010:67).

In order to understand the context of post-1994 journalism studies and training in South Africa, it is critical to recognise that it is a product of larger social and political circumstances (Dube, 2013:20). Prior to the end of apartheid in 1994, journalism education and training in South Africa was disjointed as a result of different media agendas (Prinsloo, 2010:189). Du Toit (2009:2) notes the existence of two distinct university systems prior to 1994, namely the Afrikaans-language universities and the English-language universities. On the one hand Afrikaans-language universities were aligned with Afrikaner nationalism and functioned as instruments of the state (Prinsloo, 2010:189). English-language universities' main agenda, on the other hand, was to produce South Africans who could play a role in fighting the oppressive state (Steenveld, 2006:259).

Journalism education and teaching departments in Afrikaans-language universities in South Africa understood that, prior to 1994, they played an instrumental role in serving the interest of dominant social institutions while contributing to the construction of the Afrikaner nation (Prinsloo, 2010:189). English-language universities' journalism education and training programmes were largely inspired by global contributors and critical intellectual work generated under scholars such as Freire, Fanon and Gramsci (Prinsloo, 2010:190). This equipped them with the theoretical foundation to understand and critique the "relationship

among the National Party government, sectors of the media, and how this relationship was used to the benefit of apartheid” (De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:12).

The end of apartheid in 1994, and the election of a post-apartheid government, brought significant changes to the social political conditions of South Africa, in turn necessitating the transformation of the journalism education and training curricula at South African tertiary institutions (De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:12). Harber (2004:81) notes that post-apartheid South Africa called for the reconfiguration of the journalist’s role – redressing the inequalities of the past and opening up platforms for previously disadvantaged and marginalised voices.

De Beer and Steyn (2002:387) say that:

[N]ot only does journalism education and training have to contend with the complexities of a country that is struggling to transform following apartheid, but it has to simultaneously deal with a rapidly changing and developing global journalism landscape.

This simultaneous transformation, according to Wasserman (2005:161), led to journalism educators and scholars needing to build a journalism education and training curriculum that not only kept pace with the rapid growth of new media technologies, but one that was relevant to South Africa’s post-apartheid socio-political environment. Dube (2013:22) argues that this transformation meant that journalism education and training institutions had to reconfigure the role of journalism in a “new” South Africa, while adapting to a new world that demanded different things of journalists.

According to Goodman and Steyn (2017:182), for journalism education in South Africa to remain relevant, it needs to ensure continuous innovation and growth in an ever-changing world of new media. Future newsmakers and journalists need to be up to date with new technologies and new media developments, which will aid them in the process of gathering, sorting and distributing information to the public (Goodman & Steyn, 2017:188). However, it remains important that, with these technological developments, journalists and tertiary institutions alike realise and understand the ethical implications of using new media technologies for these processes (Goodman & Steyn, 2017:188).

## 2.5 The state of journalism education and training (JE&T) in South Africa

South African journalism education continues to have an Anglo-American foundation, according to Goodman and Steyn (2017:181). However, since the end of the 20th century there has been a strong call by academics to develop a journalism curriculum that takes more notice of ethnic African knowledge systems (Dube, 2013; Rodny-Gumede, 2014; Goodman & Steyn, 2017).

Changes in the South African media landscape following the end of the apartheid era in the 1990s saw great debate regarding journalism education, with the global “theory versus practice” debate being at the centre of these discussions (De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:26).

Motloun (2007:55) contends that there is much deliberation on the need for journalism education in South Africa to include the honing of an informed and critical mindset, while continuing to teach practical skills.

Furthermore, when looking at the state of journalism education in South Africa today, Prinsloo (2010:77) says that there is a noticeable divide between the number of colleges that offer practical journalism training, and the traditional universities that tend to focus on more holistic degrees in media and journalism education. Universities are inclined to teach both occupational and critical skills, while making sure students have a broad understanding of the socio-political environment in which the media in South Africa are situated (Goodman & Steyn, 2017:189). Private colleges, in comparison, focus more on skills-based learning and making sure that students are practically equipped when entering the workplace (Goodman & Steyn, 2017:189).

In order to ensure the advancement of journalism education in South Africa, editors increasingly require journalists who can operate in ever-changing newsroom environments without much additional on-the-job training – journalists who are able to respond to the realities of their immediate environment. Pavlik (2013:212) postulates that a constantly changing media industry has resulted in journalists and journalism educators being challenged with the task of how to properly prepare the journalists and media professionals of the future.

De Beer, *et al.* (2017:175) state that they are deeply worried about the future of journalism education in South Africa. Journalism is not a licensed profession the country, which means that anyone is able to call themselves a journalist or a reporter (De Beer, *et al.* 2017:176). It can be argued, according to Goodman and Steyn (2017:189), that journalism schools and universities exists exclusively for teaching, and that they do not play a “real role” in the practice of modern-day news media. According to Rodny-Gumede (2014:61), South African

universities need to change in order to drive the journalistic profession forward and become the “connective tissue” between the media of the past and the media of the future.

## **2.6 The state of journalism education and training (JE&T) globally**

Berger and Foote (cited in Goodman and Steyn, 2017: 245) postulate that globally, a wide variety of non-academic journalism training institutions are looking toward more “traditional” journalism schools based within higher learning institutions to supply sufficient journalism education. Berger and Foote (cited in Goodman and Steyn, 2017: 245) state that this is reason enough for “traditional” teachers of journalism education to redress their context and the role that they play within a community.

Berger (2009:32) states that journalism education at the university level globally has never been the “last stop” for professional education. Nevertheless, in much of the world university-level journalism education continues to constitute the largest provider of journalism education, especially at the entry-level. At the same time, the question of who provides journalism education and who is a journalism teacher continues to change (Berger, 2009: 33).

Deuze (2008: 270) postulates that journalism education has moved toward a system provided more by universities and stand-alone institutes than either self-education or purely on-the-job training. The current increase in university-based programs also exists within systems that are increasingly transcending national boundaries, he adds (Deuze: 2008: 271).

Many university programs have established close ties with professional news organizations (Goodman and Steyn, 2017: 249). Partnerships between industry and universities are also beginning to appear, according to Deuze (2008: 271). Internships have developed as a key experiential learning component in curricula, which often favour professional skills (Goodman and Steyn, 2017: 249). Industry professionals visit classrooms, and some teach as adjuncts. Because the media sector is known for its low investment in training, Goodman and Steyn (2017: 249) state that university-sponsored programs have ultimately been a blessing for media operations by increasingly supplying their labour needs.

In addition to the partnership between industry and universities, online options in journalism education globally have helped make the increasingly crowded online field more universally accessible (Goodman and Steyn, 2017: 249) Many journalism teachers around the world are also making their course outlines and resources freely available online (Deuze, 2008: 270).

Berger (2009: 34) argues that in much of the developing world, journalism professionals' lack of respect for university journalism education remains a formidable challenge and impedes a closer relationship between professionals and the academy. He states that only when these barriers begin to crumble in more countries will increased connections among professionals, universities, and other training organizations blossom (Berger, 2009: 34).

Deuze (2008: 271) postulates that because media industries have been changing so rapidly, it is imperative that all journalism education organizations become especially nimble. Journalism education at universities has been under considerable pressure to change and update itself, especially in the area of converged media (Deuze, 2008: 271). This reality presents a good opportunity to assess the unique value that institutions in higher education bring to the cause of better-educated, empowered journalists (Deuze, 2008: 271).

## **2.7 JE&T adapts to a changing media landscape**

The rise of new media technologies has ushered in new ways of doing journalism, while simultaneously forcing the journalist to adapt to the changing media landscape. Dube (2013:39) says that the ability to select quality information that would enable the public to make informed socio-political decisions is all the more imperative in the 21st century, as the journalism landscape has become complicated due to an overload of information. This abundance of information, according to Meyer (2002:1) calls for a journalist who is a “database manager, a data processor, and a data analyst”. Furthermore, Gillmor (2016:815) writes that journalism training and education should not only enable journalists to grapple with the problems of reporting news in a time of information overload, but also to bring professionalism to their work.

Finberg and Klinger (2014:18) write that, when thinking about the future of journalism education, it is vital to remember that the “future of journalism and the future of journalism education are bound together”. Moreover, Finberg and Klinger (2014:18) state that journalism education is vital, as “it [is] important to note that news is not less important today than it has been in the past. It is not that news is being consumed less”.

According to Gillmor (2016:815), journalism schools have only recently embraced digital technologies in their work with students who plan to enter traditional media. Gillmor (2016:815) states that journalism education and training could and should have a long and even prosperous future – if educators make some fundamental shifts, recognising the realities of the twenty-first century.

For generations, according to Wenger (2011:19), working for a university newspaper was a training ground for those who aspired to become journalists and news editors. Wenger (2011:17) writes that those entering the newsroom must possess strong web and multimedia skills, as well as strong writing skills, and that university newspaper training simply no longer is sufficient. Aspiring journalists need to be content-driven, producing copy for print as well as for social media platforms, and training in these aspects is vital (Wenger, 2011:19).

In journalism education and training today, in an ever-changing media landscape, a student's perception of newsroom practices is often shaped through work experience (Detenbar, 2012:48). According to Detenbar (2012:48), students who worked with news companies, for instance, expressed greater concern about unethical journalistic practices and were more likely to support punitive measures for journalistic plagiarism and fabrication.

Brikše (2009:98) writes that, over the last several decades, journalism has undergone essential and very broad transformations. The traditional opposition between practitioners and academics about the best way to become a journalist is tending to become a broad platform for debate. The central issue says Brikše (2009:98) is "What effects have the changes in how journalists are educated had on journalism's sense of itself?"

Few people today would disagree that one of the best ways to become a good journalist is to learn the craft in a newsroom, although what has been labelled the hospital training method (Frith & Meech, 2007:139). The hospital training method in journalism is when a journalist receives most of what is learnt directly from working within the newsroom (Frith & Meech, 2007:139). While this method is widely incorporated across tertiary journalism studies programmes in South Africa, Brikše (2009:98) says the media are increasingly looking for university graduates in the fields of journalism and other sectors. Brikše (2009:98) explains that this is because on-the-job training is more expensive, and there is no guarantee that, once trained, the individual will not abandon the relevant media outlet (Brikše, 2009:98).

In addition, Brikše (2009:98) writes that knowledge changes so quickly today that graduates who may lack skills in the profession may offer a media outlet a new and broader view of many different questions. This is why there is increasing support for the view that "most entry-level professional journalists come out of university-based journalism programmes, which makes universities an important factor in media capacity building" (Brikše, 2009:98).

According to Ferrucci (2017:3), few studies have tracked how students are negotiating the newsroom and whether the education they received suitably prepared them to negotiate professional values.

This researcher planned to address the apparent gap in the literature by exploring how newly graduated students are negotiating ethical dilemmas in the newsroom. As such, the quality of journalism education in South Africa, with a specific focus on ethical training, can also be assessed.

## **2.8 Finding the balance between traditional and modern JE&T curricula**

Throughout the history of journalism, journalism education has been a professionally orientated programme focused on educating students for jobs in the media industries (Pavlik, 2013:212). This is evident in the assessment required by accreditation standards, in the curriculum offered at many journalism schools, and in the division between journalism educators and journalism scholars (Zelizer, 2004:88).

Research done by the Poynter Institute<sup>10</sup> reveals a large divergence between working professional journalists and educators of journalism. Finberg and Klinger (2014:2) write that journalists lack a grasp of core journalism skills, particularly skills needed for multimedia journalism on newly established mediums, as well as new methods used to gather and deliver news.

Incorporating digital technology into journalism education is nothing new, writes Ferrucci (2017:2). However, the relationship between most academics and the industry itself is not strong, and therefore instructors struggle with an understanding of what new skills and technologies they should be teaching aspiring journalists (Pavlik, 2013:212). As a result of this disconnect, educators are left with the unenviable task of balancing the need for technology skills, while maintaining necessary traditional journalism skills (Ferrucci, 2017:4).

In addition to the need for multimedia and digital skills, Finberg and Klinger (2014:18) argue that journalists are lacking a thorough understanding of the media landscape and knowledge of the media business, a grasp on other cultures, teamwork and leadership skills, and the ability to master various forms of journalistic writing.

A 2017 study by Ferrucci, looking at perceptions of journalism education among veterans in the field, found that “new journalists have more technology skills but lack traditional journalism skills, which potentially leaves them at a significant disadvantage when they enter the field” (Ferrucci, 2017:3). The study emphasises that, while educators need to continue to teach

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<sup>10</sup> The Poynter Institute for Media Studies is a non-profit school for journalism located in St. Petersburg, Florida (Poynter.org).



technology to journalism students in the classroom, there is a need for students to learn the timeless skills necessary for becoming a successful journalist (Ferrucci, 2017:5). Furthermore, the study found that journalism programmes need to offer a greater balance between teaching technology and traditional journalism, with “more time devoted to the teaching of basics” (Ferrucci, 2017:3).

Meanwhile, Cagé (2016:66) argues that journalism educators cannot rely solely on teaching students in the manner they have been for the past handful of decades; modern-day journalism curricula desperately need to include more of a focus on developing technologies, and how journalists are expected to navigate the newsrooms using these advancements (Cagé, 2016: 66).

Pavlik (2013:220) writes that although it is evident that journalism education and the curriculum used need to be updated to include a “healthy amount of technology”, how and how much to incorporate remains the greatest challenge. Furthermore, Pavlik (2013:215) argues that, in addition to the focus on technology, journalism educators need to focus on teaching entrepreneurship as well. Therefore, not only the journalism skills needed to navigate the newsroom should be taught, but journalists should also be provided with skills concerning technology and business (Pavlik, 2013:220).

Webb (2015: 67) states that universities need to focus on propelling the profession of journalism forward, in a direction that sees journalists as the “connective tissue between what’s come before and what’s still to come”. Webb (2015:68) adds that, in order to catalyse real change, a cultural revolution needs to happen.

According to Webb (2015:87), in order for journalism training and education to succeed the degree needs to include modules on the philosophy of the Internet, and on law, finance and accounting, and audience engagement. Furthermore, Webb (2015:87) writes that all students that study journalism need to take courses that give them a more “holistic” foundation to journalism, teach them deep research methods and skills in programming.

Berger (2016:33) writes that traditional skills for journalism, such as interviewing, critical thinking and understanding newsworthiness, are evidently missing from several journalism curricula, as many have incorporated a far greater amount of technology into the curriculum in comparison to teaching the traditional foundations of journalism. Furthermore, Berger (2016:34) states that:

Today’s journalism students want more training in technology due to the expectations of the field. Although participants cannot know whether journalism programmes are not spending enough time teaching



the basics, it can be extrapolated that since today's new entrants are potentially less accomplished in the basics, programmes could benefit from a renewed focus on these traditional journalism skills. In fact, since the clear majority of students currently in journalism programmes are digitally native in that they matured using digital technologies, it could make sense for journalism programmes to focus less on technology.

Ferrucci (2017:9) writes that it is vital that journalism educators stay up to date on new technologies, thus enabling them to teach those more seamlessly. However, an understanding of what is fundamental and what is not will allow for more time to be spent on the essentials, such as the traditional foundations of journalism (Ferrucci, 2017:9).

Eric Newton, a senior adviser at the Knight Foundation,<sup>11</sup> continues to advocate for the “teaching hospital” model to be implemented in journalism education (Newton, 2012:12). He states that “people learn by doing”, and that it is hard for him to believe that it is not compulsory for journalism programmes globally to use the same model as that in law schools and teaching hospitals (Webb, 2015:87).

Webb (2015:86) writes that Newton is correct, and that there is no feasible way to advance the development of journalism than to add a compulsory “working” component to journalism majors. Newton (2012:12) states that “in practical terms this would mean replacing the internship requirement for some schools with a more experiential learning component that he feels is currently missing from journalism curricula”. This would mean that the industry and faculty work together to mentor students and ensure that they receive proper training prior to entering the workplace as a professional journalist (Newton 2012:12). Furthermore, “by rotating the students through several divisions in the newsroom, students not only learn and develop the skills needed practically to practice as a journalist, but additionally gain knowledge and invaluable perspective and empathy before starting their careers” (Newton 2012:12).

Newton (2012:12) writes that, upon leaving university, journalism graduates need to be well equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving fundamentals, a thorough knowledge of teamwork, awareness of the importance of successful collaboration and time management.

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<sup>11</sup> A non-profit organisation that “supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts” (knightfoundation.org).

## 2.9 Summary

This chapter explored the current literature that is relevant to the research phenomenon.

Firstly, the researcher provided an overview of major changes to the boundaries of journalism, both globally and in South Africa, following the rise of new media technologies, social media, fake news and citizen journalism. The researcher then defined what professionalism is in a journalistic capacity and addressed the effect that the aforementioned changes have had on journalistic professionalism. Following this, the researcher focused on the development of media training and education in South Africa and if/how journalism education and training in the country have kept up with changes to the boundaries of journalism. Furthermore, this chapter addressed the practice of journalism ethics in the digital environment, and the role of journalism education and training in an ever-changing media environment.

The review of the literature in this chapter explored gaps that the study will attempt to fill by way of identifying how newly graduated students are navigating the newsroom in South Africa.

In the next chapter, the theoretical points of departure as foundation for this study will be discussed.

## Chapter 3 : Theoretical Points of Departure

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical points of departure of this exploratory pilot study on media ethics training – as viewed from the vantage point of journalism graduates. The researcher focuses on one of the normative theories applicable to the South African media landscape in order to gain a better understanding of the role perceptions of newly graduated journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online. The theoretical framework of this study is thus based on a combination of the concepts of social responsibility theory and the basic tenets of journalistic role perception, with a specific focus on professionalism. This theoretical approach aids in coming to an understanding of journalists' attitudes towards journalism ethics and professionalism, and to what extent they feel that their training equipped them to deal with ethical issues.

This chapter firstly provides a basic understanding of normative theory and its relevance to this study as a theoretical point of departure. Normative theories explain what the media should and should not be doing within society (McQuail, 2010:162). The general argument is that journalists adhere to certain normative guidelines in order to make sure that they follow ethical practices.

Following this, the researcher describes a specific normative theory applicable to this study, namely social responsibility theory. As such, the way journalists view themselves and their social responsibility toward their audience, while adhering to the notions of impartiality and neutrality, is explored.

Social responsibility theory was chosen as the theoretical point of departure as it serves as a guideline for creating professionalism in the media by promoting ideals regarding accuracy, truth and information (Fourie, 2008:116). Within the South African media context, social responsibility theory is still accepted as the norm.

Thereafter, this researcher examines the work of other researchers who have made use of social responsibility theory within the context of the South African media landscape in order to determine if it is the most suitable theory for this particular study.

The concept of role perception is addressed thereafter. According to Zelizer (2004:56), journalists' role perceptions have a great impact on their professional behaviour and are therefore used to explain the differences between news cultures and various understandings of

journalistic professionalism. In this study, role professionalism is used in order to understand the roles that guide journalistic attitudes and behaviours.

The chapter concludes by summarising the central theoretical point of departure of the study.

### 3.2 The foundations of normative theory

Students of journalism and practitioners of communication need to critically examine the media's place and task in society. This is especially relevant in societies like South Africa, where democracy is understood not only as a political system, but also as a culture due to its long and intricate history (Christians, Glasser, Denis, Nordenstreng & White, 2009:7). Christians *et al.* (2009:65) provide the following definition of normative theory:

[W]e define normative theory of public communication as the reasoned explanation of how public discourse should be carried on in order for a community or nation to work out solutions to its problems. It is a theory in that it attempts to explain how certain forms of public discourse lead to good collective decisions.

Christians *et al.* (2009:9) argue that students and practitioners of journalism need to identify the role that journalism currently plays in society, in addition to addressing the role that journalism *should* play in a developing society like South Africa.

Normative theory defines how the media should function in a society if certain social values are taken into account (Christians *et al.*, 2009:25; McQuail, 2010:14). According to McQuail (2010:14), these theories play a role in the formation and legitimisation of media institutions. In democratic societies like South Africa, the role that the media plays may include a monitoring role, a facilitative role, a radical role and a collaborative role (Christians *et al.*, 2009:25). According to Issawi and Cammaerts (2016:549), these roles are not mutually restricted; however, they point to alternative ways of how journalism is positioned in society:

1. The *monitoring role* suggests that the media should play an objective and neutral watching role to the "powers that be", while at the same time being part of the power structures they are supposed to hold accountable and critique (Issawi & Cammaerts, 2016:549).

2. The *facilitative role* refers to the desire for independence from the abovementioned power structures, achieved by the media providing a platform for citizens to participate politically (Issawi & Cammaerts, 2016:549).
3. The *radical role* consists of oppositional powers that challenge those who are in seats of power, calling for systematic change through delegitimisation (Issawi & Cammaerts, 2016:550).
4. The *collaborative role* refers to media and journalists who act purely to safeguard the interests of those in seats of power (Issawi & Cammaerts, 2016:550).

According to Fourie (2008:118), normative media theory provides a guideline for measuring and controlling the quality and duty of the media. Furthermore, Fourie (2008:118) says that it does not only determine what the media should do or what is expected of them, but can be used as a starting point to describe how journalists themselves describe their roles and responsibilities.

The primary purpose of normative theory is to cultivate an index against which media performance, liability and overall quality can be measured and, if required, controlled (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:27). The secondary purpose of normative theory is to assess media freedom in relation to a country's political regime, as a fundamental cornerstone of the theory is "the right to freedom of expression as a prerequisite for democracy and thus a role of the media in democracy" (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:27).

According to Christians *et al.* (2009:8), normative media theory is relevant due to the continued need for increased theoretical handlings of media and society in general, and journalism and democracy in particular. The foundations of normative theory deal with basic questions, such as: "What is and what should be the media's role in a democratic society? How do we classify media systems and journalistic traditions and how can the media be useful to the development of a democracy?" (Christians *et al.*, 2009:9).

Normative theory first came to the foreground in 1956, when it was conceptualised by three American professors of communication, namely Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm into the "four theories of the press" (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). These four theories were the authoritarian theory, libertarian theory, social responsibility theory and the Soviet-media theory:

1. The *authoritarian theory* describes all media forms as being under the control of the government, authorities or influential officials (Siebert *et al.*, 1956).
2. The *libertarian theory* is rooted in freedom of thought and individualism, and sees privately owned media acting as a watchdog (Siebert *et al.*, 1956).
3. The *social responsibility theory* entails free press without any government censorship, while understanding that the right to free expression must be balanced against the private rights of others and against vital society interest (Siebert *et al.*, 1956).
4. The *Soviet-media theory* describes government controlling the media and communication in order to “serve working classes and their interest” (Siebert *et al.*, 1956).

The aforementioned theories address the varying extents to which the media are influenced by government control and what they (the media) consider their position in society to be. McQuail (2010:175) explains that, since their conceptualisation, these theories have had to adapt and be moulded in order to keep up with the changes in society and the media.

When addressing the context of the South African media, the social responsibility theory is arguably the most suited. The key elements of social responsibility theory will be discussed in section 3.3 below.

### 3.3 Social responsibility theory

Philosophically, according to Christians *et al.* (2009:25), social responsibility theory is built on an attempt to retain freedom as the basic value for organising the media and public communication. Social responsibility ethics assumes that the human being comprises a particular cultural background and preferences, and human free will does not guarantee the ultimate good for everyone (Christians *et al.*, 2009:25). This means, according to Christians *et al.* (2009: 26), that there needs to be a form of control or regulation.

Skjerdal (2001: 34) writes that social responsibility theory grew out of dissatisfaction with the libertarian press. He writes that the Hutchins Commission<sup>12</sup> in 1947 condemned modern-day

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<sup>12</sup> The Hutchins Commission (1947) was formed during World War II to inquire into the proper function of the media in a modern democracy. The concept of social responsibility was contained in the report but, according to Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2009:299), the commission “echoed but utterly failed to refer to a global discourse on press responsibility”.

American media for disjointing media messages from their context and giving people what they wanted for their personal gain rather than what they needed for their societal commitment (Skjerdal, 2001:34). The commission called for a “socially responsible” press, leading to a theory that, according to Retief (2002:11), lies between authoritarian and liberal theory because it gives total media freedom on the one hand, but external control on the other.

Social responsibility theory is fundamentally based on the role the media play in supporting and upholding society, and the responsibility that the media hold in furthering democratic principles (Fourie, 2008:107). This theory attempts to reconcile the ideas of freedom and the independence of the media with the responsibility that the media have within and to society (Fourie, 2008:107).

McQuail (2010:87) outlines social responsibility theory by emphasising the media’s obligation to society. Furthermore, McQuail (2010:87) writes that the news media should be truthful, balanced, fair and objective. According to Hyde-Clarke (2011:29), there are two solutions to solving the problem of reconciling freedom with the use of social responsibility. The first is the development of a press council that is self-governing and independent of the ruling government, such as the Press Council of South Africa (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:29). The second is the continued development of professional training and education within media and of media students (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:29). Social responsibility theory is the most suitable theoretical framework to use when evaluating the South African media, due to the prevalence of self-regulatory measures in most media environments (Retief, 2002; Fourie, 2008; McQuail, 2010; Oosthuizen, 2014).

### **3.4 Social responsibility theory in a South African context**

The social responsibility theory of the press has guided mainstream media in South Africa for several years (Froneman, 1997:202). McQuail (2010:115) writes that one of the most significant elements of social responsibility theory is the media’s obligation to support the political principles of democracy while maintaining independence. In order to fulfil this responsibility, Fourie (2008:114) states that the media need to maintain certain standards and fulfil certain obligations, including the creation of a forum in which different points of view can be debated. According to Fourie (2008:114), the general principle of the theory is that the media must be self-regulatory within the framework of legislation and established institutions. In South Africa there are various institutions and forums that regulate and debate different aspects of the media.

Retief (2002:11) says that, when apartheid ended in South Africa in 1994, a system of regulation and self-regulation was implemented, meaning that the South African media operate under regulatory bodies that are independent of the government. These institutional bodies include the Press Ombudsman, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa and the South African National Editors' Forum (McQuail, 2010:14). According to these professional bodies, the media have the responsibility to promote freedom of speech, but concurrently also have a responsibility to provide fair, accurate and honest information (McQuail, 2010:14).

Froneman (1997:134) writes that one of the biggest criticisms of using social responsibility theory in South Africa is that it is inadequate in practice. McQuail (2010:54) adds that it can only be applied successfully if press freedom is guaranteed, and in South Africa this is not always the case. In addition to this, McQuail (2010:56) writes that there currently is legislation in South Africa that might further limit media freedom, such as the proposed Protection of State Information Bill. Nevertheless, the mainstream media in South Africa still function largely in terms of the model of social responsibility theory (McQuail, 2010:56).

Several studies have been done to explore the relevance of social responsibility theory to the South African media context (Kanyegirire, 2007; Fourie, 2008; Kloppers, 2009; Mathurine, 2011; De Beer *et al.*, 2016; Rabe, 2016; Spies, 2018).

In her study on press freedom in South Africa, Rabe (2016:871) used social responsibility theory as a theoretical point of departure due to the fact that “the theory is based on the notion that the media must maintain professional standards according to a code of conduct with a level of accountability, while remaining free from government control”. Rabe (2016:871) found that media freedom remains conditional, despite the *pro tempore* experience that it can be unconditional.

Spies (2018:43) uses a combination of three normative theories in order to determine the role perception of South African political journalists who work in the Afrikaans media. Social responsibility theory is among the three used, “as it continues to be regarded as the basic point of departure when studying the role of the media in a free society”. Spies (2018:52) finds that “Afrikaans journalists can fulfil their social responsibility roles by establishing themselves as independent observers and supporters of development”.

In her study of the development of student newspapers, Kloppers (2009:85) incorporated social responsibility theory in order to determine if university newspapers operate independently and to what extent they are self-regulated. Kloppers (2009:86) found that student newspapers have



the freedom to publish what they like, and to be as critical as they find necessary, as long as they obey the regulations set out in the South African press code of conduct.

Erfort (2017:67) addressed the state of arts reporting in Cape Town community newspapers with the use of social responsibility theory. This was done in order to support the assumption that the media should contribute toward the integration, continuity and order of society (McQuail, 2010:63).

Kanyegirire (2007:54) used social responsibility theory in his assessment of the role perception of African journalists with regard to the New Partnership for Africa's Development. With the help of social responsibility theory, Kanyegirire (2007:55) was able to establish that the relationships between journalists and their identifications are affected by "wider, rapidly shifting, political, economic and cultural influences".

Mathurine (2011:9) investigated the field of media assistance for new media development, and by means of social responsibility theory was able to contextualise the assumptions of media development historically and critically, with a particular focus on the new media's roles and relationships with the media environment.

De Beer (2015:60) argues that most research done on the journalistic profession in South Africa deals with a restricted group of journalists, usually in a qualitative fashion. Furthermore, De Beer (2015:61) states that the first and last countrywide study addressing the role of the journalistic profession in South Africa was done in 2002 by the South African National Editors' Forum. This project, however, only addresses the skills journalists need to do their job, and is not aimed at gaining an overall view of the way journalists view their roles toward society.

Following the aforementioned review of the literature by other South African researchers who have chosen to adopt social responsibility theory as a theoretical point of departure, this researcher is confident that it is the most suited theoretical framework for addressing the extent to which journalists feel that their training has equipped them to deal with ethical issues in the newsroom. In order to identify whether journalists feel they are properly equipped for their roles as ethical journalists, it is important to establish what journalists feel their social responsibility towards society is.

### **3.5 Journalistic role perception**

According to Donsbach (2012:56), the concept of journalistic role perception is used to describe how journalists in different cultures and media systems understand their social responsibility

toward society. Donsbach (2012:57) defines the role perception of journalists as the general expectations that journalists believe society and stakeholders have of them. “It can have a strong influence on journalists’ professional behaviour and is also used to understand the differences between current cultures” (Donsbach, 2012:56).

Research on working journalists’ professional characteristics, ideals, belief systems and role perceptions has shown how journalists tend to select and work through information within varied media systems and diverse environments (Goodman & Steyn, 2017:7). Their perceived professional roles offer unique insights into the role a country assigns the media, and serves as a reflection of a country’s deepest values.

The role perception of journalists in a particular media landscape continues to be a topic of study for several researchers (see, for instance, Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996; Weaver, 1998; Berger, 2000; Reese, 2001a; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Donsbach, 2012; Forsyth, Morrell, Lipworth, Kerridge, Jordens & Chapman, 2012; Rodny-Gumede, 2014; De Beer, 2015; Spies, 2018).

Studies prior to the year 2000 pertaining to journalists’ role perceptions mainly address journalism values and norms, such as fairness, objectivity and the adversarial role (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996:133).

To regularly assess the global state of journalism, the Worlds of Journalism Study, an academically driven project that is aimed at obtaining the views of as many journalists in the world as possible, was established (De Beer, 2015:61). The objective of this project is to help journalism researchers and journalists better understand worldviews and changes that are taking place in the professional alignments of journalists, the environments in which they operate, as well as their social functions as journalists (De Beer, 2015:61). The results of the first survey of the Worlds of Journalism Study, addressing the way South African journalists view their professional roles, showed that most of the participants (92.5%) view their role as “to report on news events as they are” (De Beer, 2015:63). About 61% of those surveyed for the study felt that it is their role to monitor and scrutinise businesses and political leaders (De Beer, 2015:64).

According to Weaver and Wilhoit (1996:133), role conception addresses journalists’ “interpretation of news journalism’s basic role and purpose”. In addition, Weaver and Wilhoit (1996:137) also refer to journalism roles as “journalistic functions” and role conceptions as “core ‘belief systems’”. Furthermore, Weaver (1998:56) found that studies of journalism role conceptions have focused on how journalists perceive several aspects of their job roles, values, ethics and the conditions under which they work – while additionally noting that a society’s cultural norms affect how journalists perceive their roles.

Berger (2009:83) suggests that modern-day journalists may, in many cases even simultaneously, subscribe to multiple roles. Hallin and Mancini (2004:251) state that “what transpires is that a journalist’s role is strongly related to political and social culture, and the degree to which democracy in a set country is established”. Rodney-Gumede (2014:58) writes that role perception includes matters related to journalism professionalism, and interpretations of objectivity, impartiality and neutrality in relation to role conceptions.

Reese (2001b:175) argues that society believes it is advantageous that journalists adhere to certain roles and ethical codes, and observe certain standards that do not violate the expectations of social order.

According to Forsyth *et al.* (2012:131), role perception has a big impact on how journalists deal with news and newsmakers, as well as the choices that individual journalists make when it comes to creating and presenting news for their audiences.

The concept of journalistic role perception is therefore used in this study, as an underlying theoretical departure point and as a means of describing how journalists view their professional role.

### **3.6 Central theoretical departure point**

Based on the preceding discussion, the central theoretical point of departure of this study can be summarised as follows: South African journalists conceive their role as primarily having a social responsibility toward society. Through describing the way early-career journalists perceive and describe this professional role, this study will address whether the education received by newly graduated journalists prepares them for their responsibility towards society.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter served to describe the theoretical framework used to address the research done on into the manner in which South African journalists hold themselves, and the work they do as journalists, accountable. A combination of journalists’ normative role perceptions, as well as their perceived need for professionalism, is used in order to describe whether South African journalists understand their social responsibility toward society. In addition, this theoretical departure point is used in order to detail whether South African journalists feel properly equipped to meet journalistic expectations. The chapter concludes by detailing the study’s

central theoretical departure point. This is done in order to clarify how this research plans to theoretically contextualise whether the education received by newly graduated journalists is sufficient.

## **Chapter 4 : Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to explain the research methodology employed in the study. The study's general research statement was formulated in Chapter 1, as follows: To what extent do journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online feel the ethical training they received prior to entering the newsroom equipped them to handle ethical challenges within the newsroom?

In order to answer this research question, the researcher used a qualitative research design.

Greeff (2011:341) writes that the research objective of a given study leads a researcher to choose the most appropriate research method. The purpose of a research design is to set out and plan the collection and organisation of data in order to eventually obtain the research findings (Mouton, 2001:107; Du Plooy, 2009:85). Furthermore, Du Plooy (2009:85) describes the research design as a framework according to which a researcher explains what was researched, who was involved, and where and when the study took place. According to Greeff (2011:341), the phrase “research design” can have two meanings, namely, “the manner by which a researcher chooses to design their study, or the general technique/s themselves that are already set out and designed”.

This researcher chose to use a qualitative research design in order to understand the views of early-career journalists through the use of semi-structured interviews. The qualitative research design allowed this researcher to gain insight into the complex nature of journalism training from the participants' point of view.

In this chapter, the design of the study with regard to sampling, data gathering and data analysis is discussed in detail.

### **4.2 Qualitative research design**

Du Plooy (2009:30) defines a qualitative research design as the interpretation and construction of the qualitative aspects of communication experiences by means of methods such as interviewing, content analysis and ethnographic observations.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:95) write that the characteristics of qualitative research include the identification of general research problems and questions. In comparison, quantitative research is direct and concrete, and measurable variables are used (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:96).

According to Jensen (2003:165), a qualitative research approach is used in order to emphasise the experiences of those who produce media; it is an internal approach to understand the culture and lived experiences of the participants. Fouché and Delport (2005:79) say that the participants' personal version, meaning, experience and/or perceptions are studied through qualitative research. According to De Beer (2015:63), qualitative research is inductive, meaning that the research begins with observations and ends with descriptions.

Amadi (2011:81) writes that the use of a qualitative research approach is regarded as the most appropriate method for studying, describing and understanding social phenomena. However, Amadi (2011:82) also believes that there is a great shortcoming in conducting research of a qualitative nature due to the fact that the results could easily be influenced by a researcher's personal preferences. This researcher has addressed this criticism by striving to remain as objective as possible. She also did not include or refer to her own personal experiences as a young, newly graduated journalist while conducting the interviews. The influence that the researcher's personal views may have had on the research will be discussed in depth later in this chapter when addressing the ethical implications.

### **4.3 Purposive sampling**

Before drawing a sample that is to be used for a study, it is vital that a researcher makes a clear distinction between the target population of the study, and the population that is accessible (Du Plooy, 2009:109). The reason for this is that a narrow selection in terms of population accessibility results in the generalisability of a researcher's findings being limited (Du Plooy, 2009:109). In qualitative research, a sample of the target population must be drawn in such a way that it is representative of that population (Du Plooy, 2009:109).

For this exploratory pilot study, the target population comprised full-time journalists who write for either News24, Eyewitness News or Independent Online and who graduated with a tertiary qualification in journalism, or any media studies-related qualification. It therefore would be erroneous to assume that this study's findings are applicable to all newly graduated journalists in South Africa. As a preliminary study, however, it will certainly add to knowledge in the field of journalism studies.

The accessible population comprised newly graduated journalists who write for News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online in Cape Town. While there are journalists in other parts of the country who have recently graduated from journalism studies programmes, this researcher did not have access to them in order to conduct semi-structured in-person interviews.

This researcher made use of purposive sampling to select the participants for the semi-structured interviews. Du Plooy (2009:107) defines sampling as the process of selecting units of analysis from a target population. Babbie and Mouton (2010:193) argue that it is often appropriate to select a sample “on the basis of knowledge of a population, its elements, and the purpose of the study”. Wimmer and Dominick (2011:94) explain that purposive sampling is used when selecting study participants for “specific characteristics and qualities”. The journalists selected for this study had completed their journalism education within the preceding ten years in order to account for the introduction of social media into the newsroom (as discussed in Chapter 1).

In order to draw this sample the researcher contacted the editors of News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, asking them each to suggest between four and eight of the journalists in their newsrooms who have most recently received journalism training. Each of the three editors gave permission for the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews with the specific journalists they suggested. The details of each participant are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Participants in the study according to media institution**

<b>Participant number</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Newsroom experience</b>	<b>Tertiary institute attended</b>
<b>Participant 1 (P1)</b>	Eyewitness News	2 years	University of the Witwatersrand
<b>Participant 2 (P2)</b>	Eyewitness News	4 years	University of Cape Town
<b>Participant 3 (P3)</b>	Eyewitness News	1 year	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
<b>Participant 4 (P4)</b>	Eyewitness News	4 years	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
<b>Participant 5 (P5)</b>	Eyewitness News	3 years	Stellenbosch University
<b>Participant 6 (P6)</b>	News24	10 months	Stellenbosch University
<b>Participant 7 (P7)</b>	News24	6 months	Stellenbosch University

<b>Participant 8 (P8)</b>	News24	1 year	University of the Free State
<b>Participant 9 (P9)</b>	News24	2 years	Stellenbosch University
<b>Participant 10 (P10)</b>	Independent Online	2 years	Damelin Correspondence College
<b>Participant 11 (P11)</b>	Independent Online	2 years	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
<b>Participant 12 (P12)</b>	Independent Online	1 year	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
<b>Participant 13 (P13)</b>	Independent Online	3 years	Durban University of Technology

The following factors limited the sample size:

1. Of the 20 journalists originally approached for the interviews, only thirteen of the participants were successfully enrolled in the study. This was due to time constraints from the journalists' side.
2. The sample size was also limited due to the fact that News24 could only supply the researcher with four journalists who had graduated from a tertiary institute in the preceding ten years.

#### **4.4 Data gathering: Semi-structured interviews**

Qualitative interviewing, according to Rubin and Rubin (2012:17), is more than collecting data: it is an alternative way of viewing the world we live in, and learning from it. The use of responsive interviewing, according to Rubin and Rubin (2012:17), can change the way researchers live and see, and how they relate to people. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) explain that a qualitative research approach is most typically used to answer

... questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view.

Interviewing is the most common form of data collection in qualitative research (Oakley, 1998; Babbie, 2010; Greeff, 2011; Winner & Dominick 2011). Babbie (2010:318) writes that the



qualitative semi-structured interview is based on a “set of topics” that are prepared for discussion, rather than a list of formalised and systematised questions. The purpose of a semi-structured interview is a form of “interaction” between the interviewer and interviewee (Babbie, 2010:319). Furthermore, Babbie (2010:318) states that no formal questions are asked in a specific order, but rather the interviewer has a general plan of topics that need to be covered during the one-on-one conversation.

Wimmer and Dominick (2011:139) state that semi-structured interviews allow interviewers to gain sufficient background knowledge about the answers to questions, and additionally allow them to observe non-verbal responses to questions.

The main advantage of conducting interviews of this nature is the vast amount of information a researcher is able to obtain (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:139).

Reagan (2006:97) says that one-on-one interviews are especially valuable when participants interact with the interviewer, providing more information than the researcher would have been able to obtain otherwise. The good researcher should, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002:183), be able to converse well and ask an array of questions in an open and trustworthy manner to receive the most thorough responses. Wimmer and Dominick (2011:139) state that it is vital that researchers be aware of interview bias, as even the smallest gesture – such as a nod in agreement or a change in vocal tone – could influence the participant’s answers.

According to Engelbrecht (2016:113), researchers who conduct semi-structured interviews assume that participants have a thorough knowledge of the subject of the study, meaning that “participants can respond easily and spontaneously”. Fouché and Delport (2005:90) state that “semi-structured interviews are especially useful when the researcher is interested in the complexity or process”. According to Fowler (2008:103), one of the advantages of semi-structured interviewing is flexibility, because researchers can repeat and add questions when they are not sure if the participant has answered the question in the correct manner. According to Spies (2018:55), the researcher can also monitor non-verbal communication by the participant during the interview.

This researcher conducted in-person semi-structured interviews with all the journalists who participated in the research. While there were several guiding questions set out by the researcher prior to the interview, the researcher sometimes deviated from the questions in order to obtain the most comprehensive information possible through interaction and conversation.

One of the disadvantages of conducting interviews is that they can be very time consuming. Researchers have furthermore found interviews to be very costly due to the need to travel to

and from interview locations – which in some cases are in different provinces or countries (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:139). This researcher incurred minimal administrative expenses travelling to the newsrooms of News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, as they all are in Cape Town within a short distance of where the researcher resides.

This researcher conducted a total of thirteen interviews from June and August 2018. Five interviews were conducted at Eyewitness News, four at News24 and four at Independent Online. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour, meaning that each of the participants had ample time to elaborate on their answers.

## **4.5 Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to mass-gathered data in order to make sense of the alternative types of data that exist and ultimately to draw conclusions regarding it (Fouché & Delport, 2005:91).

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:146) state that qualitative data analysis exists as a series of operations and processes whereby data is changed from its qualitative form after being collected into a form of “explanation, understanding and interpretation” related to society and the world we live in. Fouché and Delport (2005:91) additionally state that a thorough data analysis gives researchers a deeper understanding of the gathered data. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2011:344) explain that data is then studied and categorised so that similarities and contradictions in themes can be identified, analysed and summarised.

This researcher undertook thematic analysis, enabling her to draw conclusions regarding ethics training for journalists in South Africa. Thematic analysis is done by “looking for general thematic patterns and then organising data accordingly” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150).

The process followed by this researcher involved an in-depth look at journalistic training, professionalism, role perceptions and the ethical handling of journalism materials. The researcher recorded the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the journalism graduates on a recording device, while taking notes. Following this, the interview recordings were transferred onto a computer and transcribed. The data analysis process involved identifying similarities in the transcriptions and using colour coding to clearly identify main themes and sub-themes. After this, the themes were compared and interpreted in order to

identify clear patterns in how journalism education in South Africa prepares graduates for the ethical challenges they may face when entering the newsroom for the first time.

The themes identified were informed by the researcher's literature review, research questions and theoretical framework, as well as a careful reading of the interview transcripts. The conversations with interviewees centred around the following broad themes. These themes include:

- General attitude toward journalism training received
- Role of training journalists in media ethics
- State of journalism in South Africa
- Influence of social media on the practice of journalism in South Africa
- Suggested improvements to journalism education

The full interview protocol was approved by Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee (see ethical clearance letter attached as Appendix A)

The themes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, when the data is presented.

## **4.6 Ethical considerations**

Privacy is vital when conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews, and it remains the responsibility of the researcher to protect the privacy of the participants as well as possible. According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:344), this is especially important in the case of qualitative research, as researchers interact personally with participants.

There are several ways in which a participant's privacy can be compromised (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; De Vos *et al.*, 2011). According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:409), participants' privacy may be compromised if the researcher simply uses individuals in order to achieve a research goal without respecting the individual as a human being.

It is vital that a participant's privacy is respected at each step of the research process. In order to ensure that this researcher followed the correct ethical process, the researcher first obtained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University (see Appendix A).

All three editors of the news organisations included in this research granted formal approval for the study (see Appendix B). When approaching the participants for the interview process, the study was explained in detail and any questions that the participants had were answered thoroughly. Following the agreement to participate in the research, informed written consent was obtained from each of the participants and their employers. The informed written consent form clearly sets out the purpose of the study, the possibly risks, the confidentiality agreement as well as the rights of those participating in research. The informed consent form furthermore explained the interview process in full. For a copy of the interview consent form, see Appendix C.

In order to ensure confidentiality, the participants' names are never used in the study. In addition, the researcher made it clear to the participants that one of the aims of the study was to contribute to the improvement of journalism ethics training curricula.

The interviews were recorded on a device and, following the interviews, the audio was uploaded onto a Google Drive folder for transcription. The audio transcription was done solely by the researcher in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

The following section deals with the practical considerations the researcher had to take into account when conducting this research.

## **4.7 Practical considerations**

A number of practical considerations had to be taken into account by the researcher in order to ensure the research was successfully conducted.

The qualitative interviews needed to take place during the normal working hours of the participants, meaning that they could not last longer than forty-five minutes, as this was the time for which most of the participants in the research were willing and allowed to step out of the office. The researcher needed to time manage working a full-time job as a broadcast journalist, and having to conduct the interviews.

In addition, funding limited the location of the study to Cape Town, as the researcher could not afford, nor had time, to travel to the Johannesburg offices of each news organisation. This meant that the number of journalists interviewed for the research was also limited, as a greater number of journalists are based in the offices in Johannesburg.

The researcher was initially planning to meet all the participants in person but, due to time constraints and the participants' work schedules, two of the thirteen interviews had to be e-

mailed. This limited the flexibility of the semi-structured interviews, but the researcher sent follow-up questions by email and received very thorough answers to all these questions.

## **4.8 Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methodology used in this exploratory pilot study. The use of the qualitative research method in the form of semi-structured interviews was explained in order to identify common patterns of understanding in recently graduated journalists. Furthermore, the researcher stated that the interview data was analysed through the process of thematic analysis. The ethical steps that the researcher was required to take into account were addressed, as well as the limitations that the researcher experienced while executing the research.

The following chapter presents the analysed data collected through the series of semi-structured interviews.

## **Chapter 5 : Presentation of Results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings from results of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with a total of thirteen journalists from News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online. The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to gather information about the role that journalism education plays in the daily handling of news content, specifically addressing media ethics training. In order to gather in-depth information, the participants were asked about their views on the advancements in journalism in recent years, their role as news journalists in society and the relevance of journalism training in the age of social media and citizen journalism.

### **5.2 Review of methodology**

The semi-structured interview was described in Chapter 4 as a methodology that is used to gather in-depth information about a predetermined set of topics related to the established research problem. As detailed by Wimmer and Dominick (2011:139), “semi-structured interviews allow interviewers to gain sufficient background knowledge into answers to questions, additionally allowing researchers to observe non-verbal responses to questions”. While the interviewer had a “general plan of inquiry” (Babbie, 2010:210), no predetermined questions were asked in a specific order; rather, the interviewer covered a broad selection of topics, ranging from the kind of qualification received at tertiary level to the extent to which social media have changed the practice of ethical journalism. The following five themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data:

- General attitude toward journalism training received
- Role of training journalists in media ethics
- State of journalism in South Africa
- Influence of social media on the practice of journalism in South Africa
- Suggested improvements to journalism education

The interviews were conducted over a span of three weeks in Cape Town, at a location chosen by each journalist. This approach served to put the journalists at ease during the interviews.

While most interviews were scheduled up to three weeks in advance, some were either scheduled a few hours prior or rescheduled at short notice due to the participants being sent out on assignment unexpectedly. The researcher conducted eleven of the thirteen interviews personally, while two were done via email and a recorded telephone conversation due to time constraints.

The researcher conducted all the semi-structured interviews personally, meaning that all questions were familiar to her and could be adapted if needed during the course of the interview. According to Babbie (2010:320), this type of familiarity “allows the interview to proceed smoothly and naturally”.

Prior to each interview, the participants were sent interview protocol letters, detailing the background to and purpose of the study. The participants were also sent interview consent forms via email well in advance so that they could read the rules of conduct between researcher and research participant regarding the interview at their own leisure.

The participants were chosen using purposive sampling (as detailed in Chapter 4). Each editor at the specific news organisation suggested between four and eight of their youngest journalists. The only criteria was that those put forward needed to have completely some form of journalism training prior to entering the newsroom. This criterion was put in place in order to account for the introduction of social media into the newsroom.

The interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word and, following close analysis, the following five themes were identified. These themes correspond to the theoretical framework and literature of the study, as described in Chapter 2. The following table summarises and describes the broad themes that emerged following the analysis and into which the contents of the interviews were coded.

**Table 2: Themes that emerged during the analysis of interview data**

Theme	Description of theme
General attitude toward journalism training received	The personal background of the journalists, with specific reference to what sparked their interest in pursuing a career in journalism and where they underwent their journalism education.
Role of training journalists in media ethics	The statements made by the journalists on the role of journalism education prior to entering

	the newsroom, as well as the importance of training while practising as a journalist.
Influence of social media on the practice of journalism in South Africa	The statements the journalists made regarding their perception on the way that social media have shaped journalism, and how these platforms influence their daily practice as a journalist.
The state of journalism in South Africa	The statements journalists made on the changes experienced in journalism, and their views on the current state of journalism in South Africa .
Suggested improvements to journalism education	Any suggestions made related to the future of journalism education and training, and the possible changes that should be made in order to advance journalism training and education in South Africa.

### 5.3 Findings from the semi-structured interviews

The findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online are presented together since the views of the individual journalists are the focus of the study, rather than the views of each news organisation. While the aim was not to compare the operations at the three newsrooms, differences that present themselves at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online are noted. The respondents' statements and perceptions are discussed according to the various themes that emerged following the analysis of the interview data.

#### 5.4.1 Theme 1: General attitude toward journalism training received

The journalists interviewed for this study were all under the age of thirty and in the first five years of working as professional journalists. Each of the journalists holds a tertiary qualification in journalism or media studies from a South African tertiary institution. Two of the thirteen journalists interviewed for this study are working at intern level, with the rest all being



employed permanently. Most of the research participants recall spending school and university holidays job-shadowing at news organisations in order to gain an understanding of the career choice they were about to make. Participant 3, a reporter from Eyewitness News, said every spare moment during school was spent asking news editors for job-shadowing opportunities:

I knew I wanted to be a journalist when I was nine years old, simply because a teacher planted that seed, but the more I discovered what it means to be a journalist, by watching other people, the more I realised that I needed to be a journalist. I wanted to tell people's stories (P3).

Participant 7, an intern journalist at News24, echoed this, saying they<sup>13</sup> forced their way into working in several newsrooms during university, taking every opportunity they were given:

Just learning and listening from journalists was a wealth of knowledge that no university would ever have been able to give me (P7).

Four of the journalists had completed the one-year BPhil<sup>14</sup> Journalism programme at Stellenbosch University, which is described as being intensive, cutting-edge training to prepare media professionals for the challenges of the 21st century (Stellenbosch University, 2018). Participant 5, a reporter at EWN, said they thought they would be better prepared to enter a job in the newsroom following this year-long, high-demand programme:

I don't think my journalism honours year prepared me well enough for the real world. The one year of studying journalism was great because I got a qualification at the end of the day, which is needed to get a job, but it does not mean much when you have no experience in the working world (P5).

Four of the journalists completed a four-year BTech programme at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). This programme boasts that graduates will be able to work in "more than just the media" and that they will be "trained to communicate with skill and grace, thus enabling them to work in any Communication-related field" (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2018). Participant 3, Participant 11 and Participant 12 all said that their editors

<sup>13</sup> The plural form of the word is used in order to eliminate the chances of the journalist being identified.

<sup>14</sup> This programme has since been changed to a BAHons Journalism.

expected them to be better prepared following a very practical journalism training programme. Participant 3 stated:

Most editors I have worked with prefer hiring young journalists who have graduated from a practical-based qualification such as the one you obtain from CPUT. [They] assume we know more than we do when we enter our jobs as newly graduated journalists from places like CPUT, and therefore provide little to no guidance to us (P3).

Participant 1 had received a qualification from the University of the Witwatersrand, namely the Bachelor of Arts with Honours in the field of Journalism and Media Studies. This one-year programme is designed for graduates who have established, after obtaining an undergraduate qualification, that they would like to become journalists. According to the course website (University of the Witwatersrand, 2018), “students will find the course a rich mix of practical and academic training, designed to give them both the skills they need to operate in a newsroom and the analytic and critical knowledge so important to good journalism”. Participant 1 said they owed their newsroom preparedness to spending time in newsrooms while studying:

I spent every spare moment during my journalism honours year working in a newsroom for free. I approached every and any newsroom I could lay my hands on, even if it meant making grumpy journalists coffee day in and day out. I was able to learn first-hand through observation. This meant that the day I graduated I could do the job – I didn’t need too much training. While I do believe that I learnt a great deal in the classroom, I consider the time spent watching other journalists go about their job considerably more valuable (P1).

Another interview participant, Participant 2, received a media qualification from the University of Cape Town (UCT). The course stipulates that students will be taught basic skills and creative expertise in order to prepare them for the appropriate media in which they choose a career (University of Cape Town, 2018). The UCT website states that “the university has invested heavily in equipment and editing software, ensuring that students learn skills and procedures that will be directly relevant in their later careers” (University of Cape Town, 2018). Participant 2 said they studied media at UCT, but that is not what made them decide to become a journalist:

I fell in love with journalism and the idea of becoming a journalist once I was able to put what I had learnt in the classroom to use. It was only then that I was able to see the pieces come together and realise that this is where I see myself (P2).

One interview participant, Participant 10, said their qualification from Damelin Correspondence College, the three-year Diploma in Journalism and Media Studies, proved to be disappointing. Participant 10 said:

I spent four years getting journalism training, when at the end of the day I could have just walked into newsroom and learnt everything on the job (P10).

Participant 13, studied communication for four years at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), which included a National Diploma in Journalism as well as a BTech in Journalism. P13 said their training at DUT prepared them well for their job at Independent Media, but gave the most credit to the fact that they were forced to do a six-month internship during their fourth year of studies:

DUT was able to secure an internship for me at Independent Online, and following this internship I was able to get a job. While I think the course as a whole taught me a great deal, the most valuable part was the six months I spent interning as a journalist. Independent Online also did not treat me as an intern, they gave me responsibility from day one, probably because they are perpetually understaffed. This was very scary, but it helped me learn a lot (P13).

The final interview participant, Participant 8, obtained a BA (Journalism) degree from the University of the Free State. This course is aimed at “training journalists for the unique circumstances of a society in transition” (University of the Free State, 2018). Participant 8 said the course equipped them with the required theoretical and practical knowledge of the practice of journalism:

The fact of the matter is that at the end of the day practical experience in a newsroom is always going to trump sitting in a lecture hall learning

about what you will one day need to put into practice. It is a completely different ball-game once you step into the newsroom, but I assume this is the case with most professions? (P8).

From these findings one can deduce that the interviewed journalists, who have similar qualifications in media, journalism or communication studies from a variety of institutions, shared the feeling that their training did not prepare them well enough for the reality of the newsroom. All those interviewed agreed that they gained a far greater wealth of knowledge working practically in the newsroom, in comparison to the time spent time sitting in a classroom.

#### **5.4.2 Theme 2: Role of training journalists in media ethics**

The journalists who were interviewed were unanimous in their belief about the importance of education and training prior to entering the newsroom. While most of the participants agreed that they had learnt most of what they know about the practice of journalism through on-the-job training, the education that they received prior to entering the newsroom served as a good foundation.

Participant 6 believed that the ethical standards of journalists who have been formally trained are better. They stated that, “without journalism ethics training, journalists are simply the same people on social media who have resorted to desktop journalism” (P6).

Furthermore, Participant 6 contended that:

Practising journalism means going through that training to know how to report. We all know the effect journalism has on the world, it’s important that we make sure it does not become a negative effect. That is why it is imperative that journalism ethics is taught and taught well! Especially because when news is breaking, we need to know ethics like the back of our hand, it should come naturally to us as we ferociously type to meet deadlines (P6).

It is especially telling that the majority of those interviewed could not recall what they were taught about media ethics in their tertiary institution journalism classes.

Participant 5 said that, following an intense one-year programme at Stellenbosch University, journalists are expected to be adequately prepared for anything that would come their way when entering a job in the newsroom:

I had just spent thousands of rand getting a journalism qualification ... what I have learnt in the field makes me realise that I knew absolutely nothing leaving the classroom ... The fact that I cannot tell off had what I learnt about media ethics at university is very problematic ... I don't think my journalism training prepared me well enough for the real world ... The course did teach me to question everything and to explore both sides of the story – but that is the extent of my media ethics learnings (P5).

Participant 8 recalled learning the basic principles of journalism ethics:

I remember debates that we had in class over ethical issues ... I recall only the basic ethical rules, for example not naming minors in abuse and rape stories ... The vast ethical rules, like whether shocking statements made off-the-record could be used if it's [in the] public interest is something I still have to ponder over. We have to ask ourselves, ethically, what is [of] public interest and what is interesting to the public (P8).

Participant 4 said that, while a tertiary institution might be able to teach journalists the fundamentals of journalism, a lot of what is known is learnt from speaking to other journalists and wrestling with topics and stories:

You learn by getting stuff wrong. No journalism school can teach you how to recover from your mistakes – that is how you actually learn (P4).

Participant 7 mentioned the student publication that is run by the Stellenbosch University journalism students. This publication, called Matiemedia, allows journalism students to write stories about the happenings on campus. The participant revealed how there were several ethical standards that were ignored by the students under the eyes of the lecturers.

Participant 7 further stated that:

We were learning what we should be doing, but when it came to the practical implementation thereof ... a lot was brushed under the carpet (P7).

Participant 9 spoke of similar incidents while studying journalism at Stellenbosch University:

I know people at university during my course who were making up sources and cutting corners. If you start cutting corners during education – then you are never going to be able to successfully practise as an ethical journalist (P9).

Participant 13 maintained that the training and education, specifically in media ethics, received at DUT prepares students well enough, but that there is room for an increased focus on how to practice ethically in large media publications:

In my final year we had to go on six months of field training. We were prepared for basic ethical journalism with solid lines. We knew exactly what we could and could not do and this worked well for those of us who went into field training at basic media institutions, for example community newspapers or radio stations. However, at the bigger industry, for example Independent Media, we were left in the dark with regard to ethics that can be stretched. This is especially true when the person involved in the story is a public figure (P13).

Participant 1 said that education teaches you the basic skills to practise journalism, but physically being in a newsroom, or grappling with a story, teaches you to be a journalist:

My responsibility as a journalist is to make sure what I put on paper will be to the benefit of society as a whole. I serve the people on the street. Every time I consider doing anything that is non-ethical – I think of how this will affect those ordinary people going about their days and that snaps me back to reality. It is vital to remind ourselves of our purpose as journalists and our roles and responsibilities towards society (P1).

Participant 3 felt that poor communication and planning between educational institutions and the industry are the cause of poorly prepared young journalists:

Once you enter the newsroom following formal journalism training, you are assumed to have been taught and know everything you need to – but this is not true (P3).

The majority of those interviewed for the study argued that the concept of journalism ethics should not be limited to classroom learning. Participant 2 stated that:

Journalism ethics is simply not something you can learn thoroughly in a classroom. Editors need to take time to educate young journalists. The responsibility of learning about ethics needs to move from the classroom to the news room (P2).

Participant 7 supported this notion, and stated that “time should not be wasted on a skill that can only really be learnt in the real world working as a journalist”.

This researcher concludes that, while journalism education continues to be necessary, the practical implementation of journalism ethics is something that most students have difficulty understanding. Most of the participants interviewed for this study felt that there should be an introduction to the concept of journalism ethics at the tertiary education level, but that editors at media houses need to take responsibility for educating newly graduated journalists on the implementation thereof.

### **5.4.3 Theme 3: State of journalism in South Africa**

All of the participants who took part in this study agreed that journalism in South Africa is going through a turbulent time, with most of the participants stating that the methods of news gathering are definitely changing. Participant 1 said that:

The change in texture is resulting in many journalists doing a sloppy job and the quality of the news product is low. But the space is changing – which is a good thing, we have to adapt with the changing news world, but still keep the quality of the product based on basic journalistic rules (P1).

Participant 10 agreed that it was a very challenging time to be a journalist in South Africa:

We are in a time where the industry has cut back on a lot of resources, leaving newsrooms severely understaffed and reporters severely under pressure. This pressure has resulted in many of my colleagues cutting corners in order to get news out faster, resulting in the quality of journalism produced at Independent Online not always being up to standard (P10).

Furthermore, Participant 12 stated that the battle between editorial and advertising continued to dominate newsroom discussions, and posed a threat to the current state of journalism:

The predicament that editors are placed in when they have to keep advertisers happy causes several disputes in the newsroom. I experienced this when I wrote a story about fraud at a popular company. The company got wind of the story when I sent queries to them. I wrote the story and sent it off to the editor to be published. What I saw was published was an entirely different story – one that was pointing a finger at the victim of the fraud. My source was furious and left me in the lurch. I realised that there was a last-minute change to the story by my editor to protect the company. We also happened to carry a full advert for that company in the publication on the very same day. While I understand that we need to sell advertising to keep afloat, boundaries need to be established (P12).

Participant 6 said that political interference continues to be at the foreground of most issues in the newsroom today:

When editors are openly politically inclined ... journalists are then told of the angle they should have in the story which leans in favour to a certain political party. This is an absolute contravention of ethical journalism. But when you are continually reminded that it is a privilege to have a job in South Africa as a journalist, are you going to go against your editor and risk losing your job in the process? (P6).



All those who participated in the study felt that the understaffing of newsrooms had resulted in journalists being overworked, and therefore journalists were “easily losing site of the purpose that they play in society” (P4). Fake news was seen by all as the biggest threat to the production of quality journalism in South Africa and across the globe. All of the participants felt that the spread of fake news across social media had made them incredibly careful when writing about stories that are picked up on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

According to Participant 7, good investigative journalism is not something they had learnt to do in the newsroom:

I expected to see senior journalists dig deeper and work harder, but instead they are working against the clock to make sure that they are able to publish a story on deadline (P7).

Participant 2 said there were both challenging and positive aspects regarding the state of journalism in South Africa:

One of the positive aspects to have come out of the changes experienced in the media landscape in South Africa over the last few years is that the South African Press Council has reinvented itself in order to provide an ombudsperson for online media. Another positive is that Sanef is finally stepping up to the plate and speaking out about media freedom. The fact that online broadcast allows us to measure broadcast statistics has been an incredibly positive change, as we can now finally monitor how many people tune into the radio stations (P2).

The journalists acknowledged that the rise of digital media had caused some journalists to be lazier. This can be ascribed, in part, to the nature of online publications – being easy to edit and to correct subsequent mistakes. Two of the participants, Participant 13 and Participant 4, stated that witnessed journalists being “slack when it comes to making sure that everything that is put down in a story is factually correct” (P13) on a daily bases, and that “many journalists do not go the extra mile to ensure what they are broadcasting is absolutely factual, simply because you can delete the article, or tweet, if they realise that they are wrong” (P4).

Participant 2 said that journalists are losing sight of the role that they play in society:

I see a big need for journalism in South Africa – we need to bring people to an understanding of what is happening in South Africa – in an accurate, factual and understandable manner. We should no longer create news that is directed at a specific audience – news should be accessible to all. I should not be able to choose who I can educate or inform (P2).

From the research participants' view it seems clear that, while they remained positive about the future of journalism in South Africa, they felt that the country has a long, turbulent road ahead. Understaffing, overwork, political interference, keeping advertisers happy, and fake news were all mentioned by the participants as barriers that stand in the way of an improved state of journalism in South Africa. Along with the mention of several challenges to journalism in South Africa, positive changes that have come to the fore were also discussed. One such change includes the formation of an ombudsperson for online media specifically.

#### **5.4.4 Theme 4: Influence of social media on the practice of ethical journalism**

A majority of the participants were still wary about the credibility of information distributed via social media. While they viewed social media as a critical and helpful tool, all information and sources found on social media have to be verified independently. Journalists therefore considered social media as making both a positive and negative contribution to the practice of journalism in South Africa.

Participant 1 believed that social media provide a voice to the voiceless:

Social media allows us to hear voices and get in touch with people we could never have spoken to in the past ... if you use social media properly, it can be a huge advantage (P1).

Participant 13 was of the notion that social media keep journalists on their toes and force them to write ethical stories:

Social media makes us as reputable journalists from reputable publications double check our facts over and over – because we know if we get anything wrong, the whole world can know about it in an

instant. While social media has perpetuated fake news, it keeps us on our toes (P13).

Participant 3 viewed social media as “a kind of public ombud” in that “the public holds journalists accountable on social media and that is why it is so important to make sure that journalists’ stories are legitimate and are ethically sound” (P3).

All of the participants acknowledged the rise of fake news on social media. Furthermore, the majority of participants interviewed maintained that social media have taken away the idea of “breaking news” and has moved the emphasis from “breaking news” to “which publication has the most factually correct and thorough account of a story” (P1).

The five journalists from Eyewitness News contended that the foundation of the work done at the online publication is fundamentally rooted in the importance of “not doing it first, but doing it properly”.

Participant 7 argued that older journalists need to stop challenging the use of social media:

We were told not to rely on social media too much, which I think is a big problem. We need to move away from seeing social media as a threat or a problem – I believe that if we fully embrace it we will start to see more of the positive impact that it can have. It is not going anywhere (P7).

The majority of those interviewed for the study believed that social media have transformed ethical practices in the newsroom.

Both Participant 2 and Participant 4 stated that the presence of social media in the newsroom causes a delay in the process of verification:

Social media has made us revert back to the basic ethical principles that journalism is based on ... accuracy, fact and authenticity ... ethics is continually being questioned ... social media has made us address journalism ethics and its importance (P4).

All those interviewed stated that journalism ethics surrounding social media was a topic of discussion in the newsroom almost every day. Participant 2 was of the belief that social media

ethics “is an important conversation that is continually had in the EWN newsroom – we emphasise the importance of holding each other accountable”. Participant 9 said that “media ethics is drilled into you from the day you arrive in the newsroom”, and that, “while social media causes many to bark up the wrong tree, it has been more of an advantage than not”. Social media, according to Participant 6 from News24, allows all those with access to the internet to gather news and information about the society we live in.

“We owe it to our audience to practise as ethically as we would if [social media] did not exist, and while it does take longer to fact check and verify news alerted to via social media, journalism is not supposed to be an easy job – there should be no shortcuts (P6).

Participant 5 stated that social media continue to change the landscape of journalism in a positive manner:

We are able to provide news on a greater scale to a bigger audience, more people than ever before are able to access the news due to social media. The challenge is keeping with the quality and production standard that was provided prior to social media (P5).

Participant 1 added that journalists can no longer see social media as a threat to journalism; they need to embrace it fully:

I see social media as an extension of the news. News can use social media to its advantage and *vice versa*. I have seen journalists adjust the news to make it more juicy, and later be called out over social media for not being truthful. Your reputational damage is enough to scare you off from doing anything unethical on social media or through social media (P1).

From the findings above one can argue that the overall impact of social media has been a positive one. Despite factors such as fake news and the challenges that come with the verification and authenticating of sources, social media continue to contribute to the mass production of quality news across South Africa. All journalists interviewed for the study maintained that social media allow them to access stories to which they previously would not have had no

access. In addition, social media have come to be a form of a public-led ombud in the manner they hold journalists accountable. With social media playing an increasingly important role in the newsroom, the study participants, all below the age of thirty, maintain that senior journalists need to stop challenging the use of social media in the newsroom. “Social media has made journalists revert back to the basics, in order to make sure we are factually correct before we are first” (P4).

#### **5.4.5 Theme 5: Suggested improvements to journalism education**

All of those interviewed for the study agreed that the answer to well-trained ethical journalists is improved communication between the industry and academia. Most journalists spoken to expressed the importance of engagement between journalism academics and with editors and journalists who are in the industry and in the field.

Participant 13 said that journalism educators need to trust that professional journalists can provide them with the best knowledge of what should be taught in the classroom:

Journalists are in the middle of it all, we understand the challenges we are faced with and can report back [to academics] on what to teach the upcoming lot of students to ensure they are ready to face the news world (P13).

Participant 1 agreed with Participant 13 that journalism lecturers need up-to-date field knowledge:

Someone with current field knowledge will always be a more relatable understandable lecturer than someone who has not practised journalism in a while. Journalism lecturers who have been out of the field for so long forget that we work in a completely different space than what they did when they were journalists (P1).

Participants 10, 5 and 4 stood firm in their belief that journalism ethics cannot be taught by non-working journalists:

We just need more training from people who are well seasoned and still in the field (P10).

Likewise, Participant 4 said that “educators need to be engaging working journalists to find out what is happening in the field” (P4):

We are being taught out dated media techniques by out dated media professionals who have not worked in a newsroom in ages. We need industry journalists teaching journalism (P4).

Approximately half of the journalists spoken to stated that their editors were unaware of the extent to which they were trained and prepared for working in the newsroom. Participant 3 stated that editors need to take time to ensure that their team is ethically trained, while Participant 6 said that more control and mentorship are needed in the newsroom, but that there is not time for this due to understaffing.

Participant 6 furthermore expressed the importance of co-learning:

A journalist is a critical thinker - and critical thinking cannot be taught in the classroom. Media houses need to put a fellowship programme into place for young newly graduated journalists in their first year of employment (P6)

Participant 3 shared the concern about the lack of guidance and mentorship in the newsroom

We are often taught to fend for ourselves from the get go – and that is why we make mistakes so easily. We need mentors within the newsroom who can teach us what we should and should not be doing – this will save both on mistakes, time and money in the long run. The problem however is that due to understaffing – even if you are a junior journalist – you are given the same amount of responsibility as someone who has been working in journalism for several years (P3).

Everyone spoken to agreed that internship programmes should be designed as fellowship programmes, where training is given to newly appointed young journalists. Participant 11 emphasised this by stating that “there is a big difference between what you get taught sitting at a desk in university versus reporting on a story in the field”.

When addressing how journalism graduates can be better prepared for the ethical challenges that they might face in the newsroom, all those spoken to maintained that “we need to go above

and beyond educating just journalists about media ethics. The public needs to be educated about issues such as fake news so that it is not perpetuated” (P2).

More practical experience during journalism education and training, is a solution mentioned by each participant. Participant 12 maintained that journalism students need mentorship in the newsroom while they are studying:

In this way they are able to move back and forth between the industry and academia in order to properly learn (P12).

Participant 7 agreed with Participant 12, by saying that one cannot simply learn to operate as an ethical journalist if you do not practically learn how:

Journalism students should be in a classroom in the day, and a newsroom in the evening, this is the only way that one can truly learn how to put skills learnt into practice (P7).

While most of those spoken to agreed that journalism education will still be relevant for the foreseeable future, all maintained that the medium in which journalism and journalism ethics is taught needs to change.

It is evident from the findings above that journalism education and training is a multifaceted problem. Because of understaffing, and the resultant increased pressure causing a big problem in the newsroom, many newly graduated journalists find themselves having to “learn the hard way” (P3) for the first few months of employment as a journalist. Most journalists interviewed for this study maintained that communication between industry and academia is a very big problem. The practice of journalism is changing daily and, in order to keep up with the industry’s needs academics need to ensure that they are in constant communication with those in the world of work.

## 5.4 Summary

Following the discussion of the findings from the semi-structured interviews were had with the newly graduated journalists from News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, it is evident that, while those spoken to were optimistic about the state of journalism in South Africa,

there is much room for improvement when it comes to training and the preparedness of young journalists.

Understaffing, overwork, political interference, keeping advertisers happy and fake news were all mentioned by the participants as barriers that stand in the way of an improved state of journalism in South Africa.

All those interviewed agreed in the importance of a media qualification in order to practise as a journalist in South Africa, but stressed that newly graduated journalists currently are learning more in the newsroom than in the classroom.

Most of the participants interviewed for this study felt that, while there should be an introduction to the concept of journalism ethics at the tertiary education level, editors at media houses needed to take responsibility for educating newly graduated journalists on the implementation thereof.

What came to the fore most prominently in the discussions with the participants regarding what can be done about the state of journalism education is that communication between the industry and academia should be addressed urgently.

The study concludes in the next chapter by using the data collected to answer both the general and specific research questions. Suggestions for possible further research will also be made.



## **Chapter 6 : Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 1, the researcher provided more background to the subject matter being investigated, mainly the extent to which journalism graduates are prepared to handle ethical dilemmas in the newsroom following their education and training. The overall purpose of this study was also discussed, which specifically was to determine whether journalism graduates are ethically equipped for the role that they play as journalists in South Africa.

In order to achieve the research objective of this study, this chapter addresses the research problem by answering the general and specific research questions set out in Chapter 1. The general research statement of the study is: to explore the perspectives of journalism graduates on how well their tertiary education prepares them to tackle ethical issues in the newsroom.

The researcher answers the above question by interpreting and discussing the data collected with the semi-structured interviews, as set out in Chapter 5, on the basis of the relevant literature and theories presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

This chapter concludes by suggesting possible future research in the subject of journalism education following the gaps identified in the research.

### **6.2 Brief summary of the study**

#### **6.2.1 Summary of the literature review**

Chapter 2 explored the concepts and themes that are central to the study by discussing current literature that is relevant to the research phenomenon. Firstly, an overview was given of the major changes to the boundaries of journalism as a result of the development of new media technologies, and the effect that these changes have had on journalism professionalism.

The researcher then addressed how changes to the practice of journalism have affected journalistic professionalism, the practice of journalism ethics in the digital environment, and the role of media ethics training in an ever-changing media environment.

The literature review furthermore addressed the concept of journalistic role perception, as the view that journalists have of the role that they play in society has a direct impact on the work

that they do. The literature review also discussed the normative role of the media and studies already carried out on journalists' role perceptions.

Following this, the researcher focused on the development of media training and education in South Africa, and how training in the country has kept up with changes in the practice of journalism.

It was clear to the researcher following the literature review that relatively few research studies have addressed the quality of journalism education in South Africa by way of identifying how newly graduated students are navigating the newsroom in South Africa.

### **6.2.2 Summary of theoretical points of departure**

Chapter 3 served to describe the theoretical points of departure used to address the manner in which journalists hold themselves and the work that they do accountable.

The theoretical framework of this exploratory study was based on a combination of the concepts of social responsibility theory and the basic tenets of role perception, with a specific focus on professionalism. This combination aided the researcher in understanding journalists' attitudes towards journalism ethics and professionalism, and to what extent their training equipped them to deal with the ethical issues they face in the newsroom as newly graduated journalists.

This chapter provided a basic understanding of normative theory and its relevance to this study as a theoretical point of departure. The general argument is that journalists adhere to certain normative guidelines in order to make sure that they follow ethical practices.

### **6.2.3 Summary of research methodology and presentation of findings**

In Chapter 4, the researcher discussed the research methodology used to execute the exploratory pilot study by examining the research design, data collection method, data analysis methodology, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The researcher analysed the data collected through the semi-structured interviews using thematic analysis. These results of the study were in alignment with the theories discussed in Chapter 2.

The ethical issues, as well as research limitations, experienced by the researcher while conducting the semi-structured interviews were taken into account and discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 presented the results of the thirteen semi-structured interviews with newly graduated journalists from News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online.

### 6.3 Response to research questions

In this subsection, the general and specific research questions are answered. The answers are based on data collected during the semi-structured interviews, in combination with the literature and theories discussed in Chapter 2 and 3 respectively.

The first specific research question of the study was:

**Q1: What form of ethical training did journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online receive over the last ten years?**

From the thirteen semi-structured interviews conducted, it emerged that many of the newly graduated journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online are not confident that the journalism education and training at tertiary institutions across South Africa prepared them sufficiently for the newsroom. When questioned specifically about the training received in media ethics over the course of their studies, each participant felt strongly about the fact that they were not prepared well enough in media ethics.

The journalists spoken to had completed journalism studies at a variety of tertiary institutions across South Africa, namely; UCT, SU, Wits, DUT, CPUT, Damelin Correspondence College and the University of the Free State.

Each participant failed to detail exactly what they were taught in the form of ethics during their times as students, with most stating that their institutions “covered the basics”.

The journalists interviewed proposed a variety of factors that may contribute to the lack of ethical preparedness when leaving the classroom. The first factor was a lack of being exposed to real-life ethical journalism quandaries. All the journalists spoken to argued that their ethical journalism education taught them the basic principles of practising as an ethical journalist, but never exposed them practically with regard to how to deal with ethical dilemmas in the newsroom. Of the journalists interviewed, all stated that the only purposeful ethical training that they had received was when they started working in the newsroom as newly graduated journalists. This is in line with the concept of the hospital training method, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. This concept is based on the proven success that prevails when an early-career journalist works directly in a professional newsroom and subsequently learns more (Frith & Meech, 2007:139).

The second factor contributing to the unpreparedness of journalists to handle ethical quandaries is the lack of education on social media ethics. The tertiary institutions seem to all fail to take

social media into account when teaching media ethics to journalism students. All of the participants stated that social media present the greatest ethics challenge to them as newly graduated journalists, and tertiary institutions should have prepared them better.

The third and final factor that the participants alluded to as one of the main contributors to ethical unpreparedness in the newsroom was the understanding of journalism educators that it is the responsibility of the industry, and specifically news editors, to teach the practical implementation of journalism ethics.

The participants interviewed felt that they were not adequately prepared to fulfil their social responsibility toward society. The majority of those spoken to stated that their journalistic roles were not clearly defined by tertiary institutions and, coupled with a clear lack of formal training, they felt that they were not certain of the role that they play as early-career journalists in South Africa.

It is clear, following the analysis of the interview data, that journalists across three of the predominant newsrooms in South Africa are not formally trained in journalism ethics to the extent that is needed when entering the newsroom as a newly graduated journalist.

## **Q2: What ethical challenges do journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online face in the newsroom?**

The shrinkage of newsrooms and the limitation of resources, coupled with the increased time pressure of the never-ending news cycle, are the main reasons given by journalists for ethical mishaps in the newsroom. All of those spoken to said they were often expected to cut corners due to time constraints.

In addition, journalists are expected to do an increased amount of work in a limited amount of time, and the pressure often results in ethical standards not being adhered to. Two of the participants in the study said that a limitation of time and resources meant that, on several occasions, they had made up source names in order to publish a story as soon as possible.

Another ethical challenge touched on by every participant was the influence of the onset of social media on ethical practices in the newsroom, and the challenges presented in ensuring the verification of sources from social media. All of the participants stated that a significant number of the tipoffs they receive about news stories were on social media, and this meant that additional verification had to take place and this process was often longer than simply being notified by police or officials.

The demand to please advertisers is an additional ethical challenge touched on by three of the participants. While from an ethical viewpoint, journalists should not be curating publications around demands made by advertisers, the money brought in by advertising is needed to keep a publication afloat.

Political interference was mentioned by all but two of the participants, and it was stated that political interference poses a challenge in a political climate like that in South Africa. Most of the participants mentioned that editorial staff often alluded to the need to be “easier” on certain political parties and challenging others more. One participant stated that challenging editorial staff on the matter of political interference could cost you your job, so many journalists choose to adhere to what that are instructed to do.

Fake news is the most predominant ethical challenge that has come to the fore in the last five years, resulting in journalists having to legitimise news they receive on social media. This was another time constraint alluded to by the participants.

The abovementioned challenges, namely time pressure, political interference and the legitimisation of news, are all challenges that were mentioned by the early-career journalists as limitations to journalistic professionalism. Additionally, the aforementioned challenges shaped and influenced the participants’ perceptions of the role that they play in society. Each of the participating journalists, stated that, in many instances, the aforementioned ethical challenges influenced their ability to act in the interests of and responsibly toward society.

### **Q3: How have social media influenced the practice of ethical journalism?**

For most of the participants from News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online, social media present the greatest threat to the practice of ethical journalism in South African newsrooms. Social media have, undoubtedly, changed the way the newsroom operates.

All of the participants stated that social media continue to challenge journalistic professionalism in the way that it sometimes encourages unethical behaviour. In addition, a greater volume of news, coupled with a greater demand for the production of news material, sees many of the participants acting unethically.

While all of the participants stated that social media provide a voice for the voiceless and grant journalists the opportunity to pick up and track several stories that they might not previously have had the opportunity to prior to the existence of social media, several challenges have come to the fore simultaneously.

The first challenge is the pressure on journalists to deal with a greater volume of news, despite factor such as the shrinking of newsrooms and increasing time pressure.

Simultaneously, the onset of fake news has hindered the positive influences of social media in the newsroom. Journalists have to ensure that they are truthful and only produce news that is factual.

Approximately half of the participants stated that social media have made journalists lazy. The days when reporters were expected to be on the scene of an accident or present in a courtroom have been replaced by *following*<sup>15</sup> the handful of reporters on social media who choose to leave their desks. Social media continue to drive the practice of desktop journalism, as stated by one of the participants, meaning that journalists can go days on end without leaving the newsroom. Furthermore, the participants maintained that the ability to return to a factually incorrect article that has been uploaded online and edit it in a matter of seconds has made journalists less strict when producing an article in the first place.

However, the other half of the participants stated that social media have not made journalists lazy, but rather made them pedantic about ensuring that they are factually correct at all times when writing articles for online publications. These participants stated that, once a factually incorrect article is published online, it can be distributed on social media by thousands of people in a matter of seconds, which means that a journalist's reputation can be tarnished instantaneously.

The final specific research question in this study was:

**Q4: How can ethics training at the tertiary education level better prepare graduates for the newsroom?**

It is evident from the interviews with the journalists that the most significant change or advance that needs to take place in the training and education of journalists in ethics is that students need to step out of the classroom and into the newsroom much sooner than they currently do. Journalism students need to be exposed to working in the newsroom while receiving journalism education in order to apply what is learnt as soon as possible in the working world. All of the participants advocated the hospital training method, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. The hospital training method in journalism is when a journalist receives most of what is learnt through directly working in the newsroom (Frith & Meech, 2007:139). Mentorship in the

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<sup>15</sup> The act of keeping up to date with a social media user's activities on social media.

newsroom is severely lacking, according to the journalists interviewed. An increase in the level of guidance, specifically with regard to the navigation of ethical challenges in the newsroom, needs to be introduced. However, due to understaffing and limited resources, time to mentor and teach junior journalists in the newsroom is limited.

Another popular suggestion made by the participants to advance journalism ethics education is to increase education of the public on matters such as the ethical use of social media, and fake news. If the public is taught not to perpetuate fake news on social media, journalists will spend less time having to wade through sources that are unactual and incorrect.

Furthermore, all journalists spoken to stressed that the teaching of the profession of journalism and training in media ethics should be done by working journalists. While all agreed that journalism education is needed for quality journalism to survive in South Africa, they said academics and industry need to work together in order to ensure that journalism graduates are well equipped and guided into a long career as socially responsible journalists.

Once the relationship between industry and the academy has been strengthened, journalistic professionalism will be able to advance and journalism students and early-career journalists will better understand their roles and responsibilities towards society.

In order to reach a final conclusion, the researcher summarises the four specific questions in to one general research statement:

**To explore the perspectives of journalism graduates on how well their tertiary education prepares them to tackle ethical issues in the newsroom.**

Based on the interviews with the thirteen early-career journalists who participated in the study, it is clear to this researcher that newly graduated journalists in South Africa are not being trained in the practice of media ethics to the extent they need to be.

Journalism graduates are entering the newsroom as junior journalists with training in only the basic principles of journalism ethics. The implementation of even the basic principles of media ethics is furthermore not being taught at tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, with the rise of social media, and the phenomenon of fake news coming to the fore, journalists are having to navigate ethical challenges blindly due to the lack of social media ethics training at the tertiary level.

In order to ensure that future journalism graduates are ethically equipped to handle the challenges that come with being a junior journalist in South Africa, several changes and

advances need to be made in journalism education at the tertiary level. Among the factors that were mentioned by the participants are the need for increased mentorship in the newsroom by senior journalists regarding the navigation of ethical quandaries. Another advance that needs to be made is the further implementation of the hospital training method, where journalists learn by working hands-on in the newsroom. Additionally, newsroom editors need to continue journalism education at all times in the newsroom to ensure that their reporters remain relevant at all times.

Miscommunication between the journalism industry and academia is one of the biggest threats to the advancement of journalism ethics education. Editors and lecturers need to learn from and advise one another on what journalism students need to be learning before entering the newsroom. As stated by Charlotte Kilbane, EWN editor, “in the past, industry used to look to academia for advice and trends; that is no longer the case anymore as industry is leaps and bounds ahead of academia” (Kilbane, 2018).

The predominant factor that came to the fore during the semi-structured interviews is that journalism education is being taught by non-working journalists, and in some cases by journalists who have not practised journalism in over a decade. An increase in the number of working journalists who are simultaneously teaching students how to practise ethical journalism will ensure that journalism education is up to date and relevant.

Tertiary institutions in South Africa need to teach journalism students the importance of practising as ethical journalists so that they are able to understand their roles and responsibilities towards society. Simultaneously, news editors need to make sure that early-career journalists are continuously reminded of the responsibility they have in society in order to ensure that they remain ethical and practise along the lines of professionalism. Only once this is achieved will we see advancements in the practice of ethical journalism.

## **6.4 Limitations of the study**

The researcher realises that this is a small study, but a good starting point for further study into the ethical training and awareness of newly graduated journalists. The study does not purport to be more than an exploratory pilot study with a small sample size.

## **6.5 Overall conclusion**

The main purpose of this exploratory pilot study was to determine how well prepared journalism graduates who are working as early-career journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online are to navigate the ethical challenges with which they are faced



All of the participants described their professional role as being journalists who should at all times practise in the interests of society; however, each of the early-career journalists spoken to stated that the education they received at the tertiary level did not prepare them for their responsibility toward society.

In conclusion, the exploratory pilot study found that newly graduated journalists in South Africa are not being trained in the practice of media ethics to the extent that they need to be. Action needs to be taken by both journalism educators and news editors to ensure that future journalists are taught in line with modern-day trends. This needs to be done to avoid junior journalists being ethically implicated due to a lack of sufficient ethical training.

## **6.6 Suggestions for future research**

The researcher proposes further study of the same nature with an increased sample size and more statistical analysis. Future research could employ a greater use of quantitative data analysis to enhance the findings and interpretation thereof. Furthermore, the researcher proposes that a follow-up study be undertaken with news editors at South African online news publications to determine to what extent they feel newly graduated journalists who enter their newsrooms are equipped to handle ethical challenges in the newsroom. Following this, both studies that address this topic can be used in order to determine the most suitable ethics journalism curriculum for future journalists.

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### **Personal interviews:**

Participant 1. 2018. Junior journalist. Eyewitness News. 11 July, Cape Town.

Participant 2. 2018. Junior Journalist. Eyewitness News. 11 July, Cape Town.

Participant 3. 2018. Junior Journalist. Eyewitness News. 11 July, Cape Town.

Participant 4. 2018. Junior Journalist. Eyewitness News. 12 July, Cape Town.

Participant 5. 2018. Junior Journalist. Eyewitness News. 12 July, Cape Town.

Participant 6. 2018. Junior Journalist. News24. 13 July, Email.

Participant 7. 2018. Junior Journalist. News24. 13 July, Cape Town.

Participant 8. 2018. Junior Journalist. News24. 16 July, Cape Town.

Participant 9. 2018. Junior Journalist. News24. 16 July, Cape Town.

Participant 10. 2018. Junior Journalist. Independent Online. 16 July, Email.

Participant 11. 2018. Junior Journalist. Independent Online. 17 July, Cape Town.

Participant 12. 2018. Junior Journalist. Independent Online. 17 July, Cape Town.

Participant 13. 2018. Junior Journalist. Independent Online. 18 July, Cape Town.

## Appendices

### 6.7 Appendix A: Notice of approval from the REC: Humanities



#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL

##### REC Humanities New Application Form

11 June 2018

Project number: 6774

Project Title: An exploration into the media ethics training of journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Media.

Dear Miss Nicola Bruns

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on **11 June 2018** was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities. Please note the following for your approved submission:

**Ethics approval period:**

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

**If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.**

Please use your SU project number (6774) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

#### **FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD**

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

**Included Documents:**

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at [cgraham@sun.ac.za](mailto:cgraham@sun.ac.za). Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.

The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

Protocol approval date (Humanities) Protocol expiration date (Humanities)	
07 June 2018 06 June 2021	
Document Type File Name Date Version	
Data collection tool	
Proof of permission Research Protocol/Proposal Informed Consent Form Default	
NJB_17118786_InterviewProtocol NJB_17118786_ProofOfPermission	
NJB_17118786_ResearchProposal NJB_17118786_InformedConsentForm NJB_17118786_Response to REC stipulations	
02/05/2018 1 02/05/2018 1 02/05/2018 1 07/06/2018 2 11/06/2018 1	

## Investigator Responsibilities Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

**1. Conducting the Research.** You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

**2. Participant Enrolment.** You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

**3. Informed Consent.** You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

**4. Continuing Review.** The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrolment, and contact the REC office immediately.

**5. Amendments and Changes.** If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

**6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events.** Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouche within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

**7. Research Record Keeping.** You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

**8. Provision of Counselling or emergency support.** When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

**9. Final reports.** When you have completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

**10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits.** If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

## 6.8 Appendix B: Interview permission



Johannesburg: Primedia Place, 5 Gwen Lane, Sandown, Sandton, 2196  
PO Box 5572, Rivonia, 2128  
Tel 011 506 3200 Fax 011 506 3677  
Cape Town: Suite 7D, Somerset Square, Highfield Road, Greenpoint, 8001  
Private Bag 567, Vlaeberg, 8018  
Tel 021 446 4700 Fax 021 446 4800  
**[www.ewn.co.za](http://www.ewn.co.za)**

3 April 2018

To whom it may concern

### **RE: PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW EWN JOURNALISTS**

This is to confirm that I have had discussions with Nicola Jo Bruns, 17118786, a student at your institution, concerning her MPhil research.

I have given her permission to approach the journalists at Eyewitness News with a view to interviewing them on her thesis topic: "An exploration into the media ethics training of journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Media."

Obviously, the permission of the interviewees will also be sought by Ms Bruns.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Charlotte Kilbane', followed by a horizontal line.

Charlotte Kilbane,  
News Editor, EWN, Cape Town  
[charlottek@primedia.co.za](mailto:charlottek@primedia.co.za)

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3 April 2018

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir / Madam,

This is to confirm that I have had discussions with Nicola Jo Bruns, 17118786, a student at your institution, concerning her MPhil research.

I have given her permission to approach the journalists at News24 with regard to interviewing them on her thesis topic: "An exploration into the media ethics training of journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Media."

The permission of the interviewees will also be sought by Ms Bruns.

Your sincerely



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Adriaan Basson  
Editor: News24

[adriaan@24.com](mailto:adriaan@24.com)





3 April 2018

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I have had discussions with Nicola Jo Bruns, 17118786, a student at your institution, concerning her MPhil research.

I have given her permission to approach the journalists at Independent Media with regard to interviewing them on her thesis topic: "An exploration into the media ethics training of journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Media."

Obviously, the permission of the interviewees will also be sought by Ms Bruns.

Yours sincerely,  
Riana Howa  
Editor of IOL  
[riana.howa@inl.co.za](mailto:riana.howa@inl.co.za)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Riana Howa'.

## 6.9 Appendix C: Interview consent form



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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AN EXPLORATION INTO THE MEDIA ETHICS TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS AT NEWS24, EYEWITNESS NEWS AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **NICOLA JO BRUNS** from the **Journalism Department at Stellenbosch University**. As part of my MA research, the results will contribute to my thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are or have been involved with and/or are knowledgeable about some aspects of the topic / subject. **Before entering into the interview, you must please read this informed consent form as it contains important information to help you decide whether or not to participate in this study. You are encouraged to ask as many questions as possible in order to be sure you understand the study procedures.**

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of journalism graduates on how well their tertiary education prepares them to tackle ethical issues in the newsroom.

### PROCEDURES

Enter into a semi-structured interview with **NICOLA JO BRUNS**.

Please answer questions as honestly as possible.

### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

None

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will not benefit from the study directly, but it is hoped that the recommendations of the study will improve the way journalism is taught in tertiary institutions. The study will provide insight into how journalism training institutions should adapt their media ethics courses to meet industry expectations

## **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will not receive payment for your participation in the study.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of: Using codes identify the participants.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## **RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Nicola Jo Bruns at 0720998606 and/or the supervisor Marenet Jordaan at [marenet@sun.ac.za](mailto:marenet@sun.ac.za).

## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

**DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT**

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Nicola Jo Bruns (17118786)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this “Consent Form” is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

---

**Signature of Principal Investigator**

**Date**

## 6.10 Appendix D: Declaration of language practitioner

# Marisa Honey

PO Box 7504, Stellenbosch, 7600  
Tel. 021-889 6688 Cell. 082 412 8642  
e-mail: marisahoney@iafrica.com

25 October 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Hereby I, Marisa Freya Honey, declare that I am a full-time editor and translator with more than 19 years' experience of, among other things, editing theses, dissertations and journal articles. I also wish to state that I undertook a linguistic edit of the thesis, *South African Journalism Graduates' Preparedness for Newsroom Ethics: Views of Early-career Journalists at News24, Eyewitness News and Independent Online*, on behalf of Nicola Jo Bruns, and made suggestions for corrections to be made. If these corrections were implemented, this would have ensured language of a good quality.

My qualifications are the following (all degrees obtained at Stellenbosch University:

BA (1984)  
BJournalism (Hons) *cum laude* (1986)  
BA (Hons) Philosophy (1988)  
MPhil (Translation) *cum laude* (2006)

The latter degree had a large bilingual (Afrikaans and English) editing component.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any queries.

Kind regards



Marisa Honey

